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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JUNE 16, 1997

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CORRESPONDENCE

Borking judicial review

To the editors:

"Obstruction of Justice" (May 19) refers to me as "increasingly out there" for suggesting that out-of-control courts can be brought in line by ending judicial review. Among other "out there" figures in our history were: Thomas Jefferson, who argued that court decisions should not be binding on the other branches of government; Franklin Roosevelt, who wanted to "pack" the Supreme Court with enough new Justices to reverse its constitutional rulings; and Learned Hand, who wanted to repeal part of the Constitution to stop judicial legislation. You also suggest it is the Republicans who have politicized the confirmation process. Have you no memory of what Democrats did when they controlled the Senate?

ROBERT H. BORK
Washington, D.C.

Bay watch

To the editors:

William Powers's gratuitous insults of San Francisco's daily newspapers display a journalistic tendency far more troubling than the loss of vitality he laments ("Raising Caen," May 12).

In an otherwise thoughtful piece contrasting online magazines to the work of my late colleague Herb Caen, Powers strays from his main point to offhandedly ridicule the professional efforts of about 500 Bay Area journalists.

Powers is unqualifiedly wrong in his assessment of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Examiner*. His unsubstantiated barbs do nothing to advance his point; they are apparently included only as a stylistic device to help create a sense of irony.

Print journalists are under enormous pressure to produce lively copy. They exaggerate, hype and rely on clichés. They reduce complex circumstances into easy-to-understand, black-and-white images, all in a quest to attract readers and to impress editors.

But they should never forget that their primary mission is to inform. The world, of course, is not black and white, and a good read is no excuse for misinformation. A clever sense of irony is not as important as getting the facts right. Powers's description of San Francisco's newspapers is engrossing, but wrong.

There has always been a school of writers who believe in style over substance. Journalism is better served when such writers confine their work to fiction.

MARC SANDALOW
Washington Bureau Chief
San Francisco Chronicle
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

I have no problem with William Powers bemoaning the decline of the nation's newspapers. But his lame insistence that electronic media will never be able to do what the old media did—reflect the concerns of a physical community—completely misses the point of online publishing. Why should the new media do the old media's job? I don't go to *Salon* to find out whether a big murder was solved or if the new restaurant on Maple Street is any good. I visit *Salon* for a different kind of communal experience—for example, because none of the members of my physical community have read the works of Rick Moody, and I am longing to discuss him with other bibliophiles.

Because *Salon* is published every day, Powers decides it must be modeled on a newspaper. He would be better off looking to the magazine's title for the key to *Salon*'s success. A *Salon* reader who is enraged by one of Camille Paglia's pronouncements in her column can engage in an online argument about it with other readers. Readers fascinated by the Heaven's Gate suicides can find others similarly fascinated, as can a reader whose current obsession is George Eliot. The strength of online media is the dynamism of its "community of ideas," and its potential as a forum for debate and discussion. That doesn't sound like a newspaper to me. It sounds more like a salon.

MIRIAM KLEVAN
Brooklyn, New York

To the editors:

William Powers's survey of journalism in San Francisco was the biggest puff job seen in this hemisphere since the explosion of the *Hindenburg*. It says less about the decline of the "old journalism" than about the descent of THE NEW REPUBLIC into slobbering, sycophantic gossip.

By the way, the story quoted by *San Francisco Examiner* slugger Phil Bronstein about the artist Mark Pauline and his fight with his ex-girlfriend, in which two cars were "tarred and feathered," was reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of July 4, 1991. No account appeared in the *Examiner*. Herb Caen would not have been impressed.

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ
Secretary, Northern California Newspaper Guild, AFL-CIO
San Francisco, California

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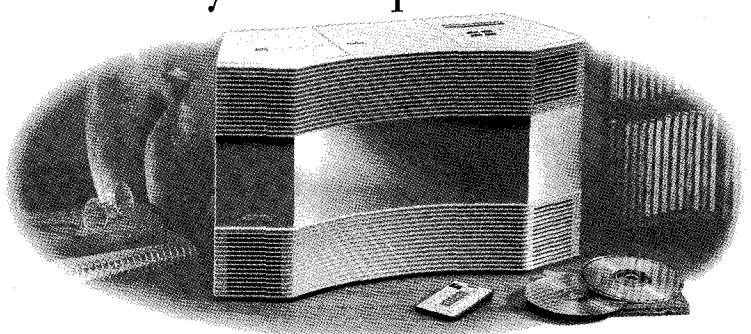

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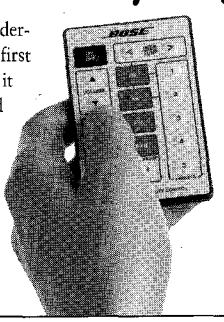

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Cutting corners

To the editors:

Michael Kelly's May 12 column, "What, Me Worry?" ends with a wonderful idea, the kind that makes you slap your forehead: all Bill Clinton has to do is ask Susan McDougal, out loud and in front of us all, to tell the truth. If he fails to ask her, clearly it is because he fears the truth. Kelly concludes that Clinton is guilty because he won't ask McDougal to spill the black-eyed beans. Why didn't we think of that?

It is even harder to understand why so many readers, myself included, can't get ignited by outrage like Kelly's over the president's proved talent for corner cutting—legal, political, marital. Willy has never bumped into a right angle he didn't reduce by 20 degrees. There isn't a corner of Christendom that is safe in his presence. After all his snipping of the past four plus years, there can't be a single 90-degree angle left anywhere in the White House. Yet, for all this, few readers have concluded that the president must face the music, perhaps because the tunes are so familiar. We are hearing the Muzak of American politics, and it takes the political equivalent of a Schoenberg string quartet to vibrate the national cochlea.

Why not devote a full issue of TNR to this question: Why don't Americans care about Clinton's purported misconduct? Assuming your readers are no less devoted to the national welfare than are your writers, it would be very useful to ask some good citizens why this tinder just won't catch fire. America doesn't seem to be worrying either. Next thing you know, Kelly will recruit Alfred E. Neuman as a symbol for the American electorate.

JOEL SNYDER
Chicago, Illinois

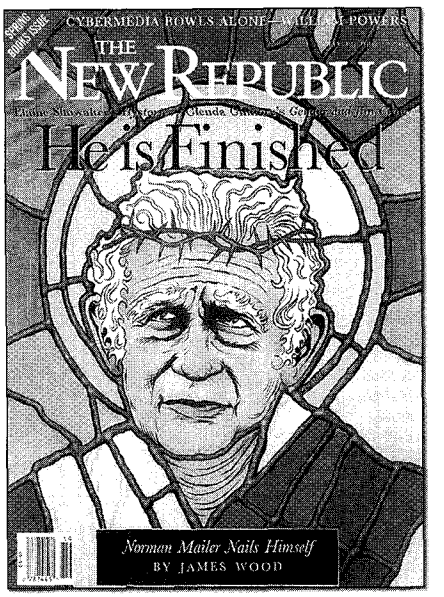
Master class

To the editors:

David Hecht confirms—and yet trivializes—the existence of human bondage in Mauritania ("Virtual Slavery," May 12). He also misreports our congressional testimony. The blacks Hecht meets in Mauritania tell him they are slaves serving Arabo-Berber masters who pay them nothing and inherit their possessions. Hecht seems unimpressed. The masters, he tells us, are impoverished from decades of drought. Their herds gone, they are forced into towns where their slaves adapt better than they do.

It's not clear if Hecht spoke to any slaves without their masters present. Maybe he couldn't find a way. But had he searched out leaders of the anti-slavery movements, like Boubacar Ould Massoud, head of SOS Esclave, he would have been taken to former slaves with scars, deformities and awful stories.

According to Anti-Slavery International, our March 1996 testimony to Congress led to sanctions on Mauritania that forced that country to reopen the question of how to deal with tens of thousands of people who were supposedly freed from slavery in 1980. Hecht misreports our testimony. He says we told Congress that Mauritanians capture their slaves in raids. We did not: slave raids ended decades ago. Since that time, captives have been bred to produce more slaves. Hecht says the State Department decided that signatures on



the sales receipt for a woman and her child that we presented to Congress were forged. But there are no signatures on that receipt. Hecht thinks the torture of slaves we reported to Congress was antigovernment propaganda; but it is documented in reports by the prestigious Human Rights Watch/Africa. Hecht's view seems best reflected by the State Department official who told him that slavery in Africa is a "social problem," and shouldn't be mentioned in a report on a country's human rights record.

Slavery *is* a social problem, but not one that Hecht understands. A slave told Hecht it would be "against G-d" for a slave to leave a master. These people, Hecht concludes, are not really held against their will. Apart from the dismal economic prospects they would face if they could leave their masters, they really don't want to.

It was Frederick Douglass who taught us that the mind of the slave was the master's best tool. Yes, the black Muslim slaves of Mauritania—who are born into slavery in this last decade of the twentieth century—have been taught to believe that G-d (Allah, in this case) wants it that way. Hecht's "virtual" report from Mauritania practically concurs. We do not.

CHARLES JACOBS
American Anti-Slavery Group
SAMUEL COTTON
Committee Against Slavery in Mauritania and Sudan
MOHAMED ATHIE
International Coalition Against Chattel Slavery

David Hecht replies:

It's good news that Charles Jacobs no longer believes there are "slave raids," though that's what he told Congress on March 13, 1996. Since he also told them he's never traveled to Mauritania, he probably heard it from people such as Mohamed Athie who attained political asylum with such misinformation. Regarding the alleged slave sale, there were signatures on the receipt, and State Department officials say the receipt is "not credible," like other key evidence presented to Congress, including the *Africa Watch Report*. Yes, there is a slave (and master) mentality in Africa, but nothing like the dehumanized institutions that Frederick Douglass had to fight in America. Blaming the Mauritanian government for that masks its real abuses, including rigging elections and persecuting southerners.

Grosse error

To the editors:

I am starting to worry about Stanley Kauffmann. Not only did he not like *Grosse Point Blank* ("Disneyland and Elsewhere," May 12), but he made at least three factual errors in his review: (1) the killing at the reunion was in a school hallway, not a locker room; (2) only one friend helped Blank dispose of the body—his love interest left the scene when she discovered what had happened; and (3) the "nebulous" business reason for the last contract hit was for impending testimony against the mob—not nebulous at all.

Further, Kauffmann appears to claim that the glib and humorous fashion in which the material is delivered is somehow both unseemly and unrepresentative of reality. In a world where mobsters speak openly and matter-of-factly of their murderous careers on national television, *Grosse Point Blank* is a veritable documentary.

MATT CARROLL
Cleveland, Ohio

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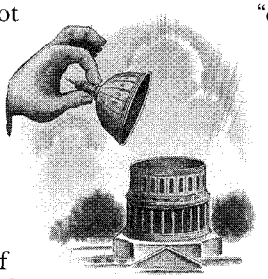
FROM WASHINGTON

Class

Taking time off from *The Washington Post*'s latest story about how the Riady family purchased FOB status, and tearing myself away from *The Washington Times*'s item on Roger Clinton's apparent reluctance to properly support his apparent love child, to read the unanimous decision by the Supreme Court to the effect that "petitioner, the current President of the United States," was not protected by his office from a lawsuit alleging that he one day had espied respondent, Paula Jones, at the Excelsior Hotel in Little Rock and had ordered a state trooper to procure Jones and bring her up to "a business suite where he made 'abhorrent' sexual advances," I pondered what exactly was the elusive quality that set this White House crowd apart from their predecessors. Class, I decided. That's what it is. They're just so classy.

Actually, the case of *William Jefferson Clinton* v. *Paula Corbin Jones* is all about class, his class and hers. His is the class that did not go to Vietnam, and for the most part did not forthrightly refuse to go to Vietnam either, because one must preserve one's "political viability." Hers is the class that *did* go, and that, in 57,000 instances, lost not merely political but mortal viability. His is the class that came of age possessed by a conviction that it was equipped to remake the world, a destiny so manifest and so manifestly good that those who shared it comprised a new elite, the elite of the deserving, privileged for the sake of us all.



When a member of this class does something a little eyebrow-raising—makes $100,000 on a sweetheart commodities deal, say, or exercises his *droit de seigneur* with a working girl—the better sort of people avert their eyes. It would be not merely unseemly to notice, it would be wrong. Unpatriotic, really. Thus, when Paula Jones, a citizen of the other class, accused Bill Clinton of exposing himself to her in a hotel room and asking her to bestow upon his person a particularly intimate kiss, she was greeted with a vast silence punctuated by occasional expressions of open class contempt. She was, said *Newsweek*'s Evan Thomas, "some sleazy woman with big hair coming out of the trailer parks." (To Thomas's credit, he later took a swipe at himself in print for this "elitist attitude.") James Carville sneered "drag $100 through a trailer park and there's no telling what you'll find." The establishment press mostly ignored Jones, and the feminists who had championed Anita Hill mostly dismissed her. Jones was a gold-digging tart, ran the storyline. (And so in some circles it still runs; *The New York Times*, in its coverage of the Supreme Court decision, saw fit to print a profile shot of Jones looking slightly come-hitherish in a tight sweater.) She had her nerve.

She certainly had. She had the nerve to fight the president of the United States all the way to the Supreme Court. And her nerve is all the more admirable for the modesty of her desires. All she wanted was a little recognition that even people like her have rights. Tight sweater and distinguishing characteristics aside, *Clinton* v. *Jones* is about egalitarianism.

"Petitioner, William Jefferson Clinton, was elected to the Presidency in 1992, and re-elected in 1996," wrote Justice John Paul Stevens in the Court's opinion. "In 1991 he was the Governor of the State of Arkansas. Respondent, Paula Corbin Jones, is a resident of California. In 1991 she lived in Arkansas, and was an employee of the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission.... [These] allegations principally describe events that are said to have occurred on the afternoon of May 8, 1991, during an official conference held at the Excelsior Hotel in Little Rock, Arkansas. The Governor delivered a speech at the conference; respondent—working as a state employee—staffed the registration desk. She alleges that [State Trooper Danny] Ferguson persuaded her to leave her desk and to visit the Governor in a business suite at the hotel, where he made 'abhorrent' sexual advances that she vehemently rejected."

Stuart Taylor Jr., in his climate-changing *American Lawyer* article defending Jones's case, concluded that "the evidence supporting Paula Jones's allega-

continued on page 45

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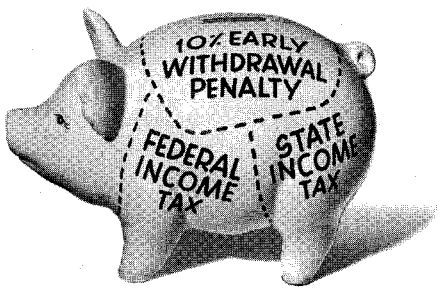

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUNE 16, 1997

THE END AND THE BEGINNING

So now we know what Laurent Kabila intends: no democracy, no political parties, no miniskirts, even. Does anyone dare admit surprise? He is a man who has spent his life in service of the proposition that power comes from the barrel of a gun, subsidized by neighboring governments that do not grant their own people the freedoms they claim they want for his. In three decades of African independence, has armed takeover produced one true democrat? Even one? That some in the West believed Kabila would prove different is a testament to our naïveté; that some in the Congo did is a testament to the sad and inexorable relationship between desperation and hope.

But Laurent Kabila will not be Mobutu Sese Seko—because the world has changed. For most of the nineteenth century, Africa was deeply isolated, its kingdoms unknown to the rest of world and irrelevant to the balance of international power. And then, in the century's waning decades, European political rivalries that could not express themselves on the European continent found an outlet in Africa, and in a frenzy born of ignorance, moralism and greed, Europe brought Africa into what scholars call "international society."

The cold war brought a new set of competitors and, perhaps, new rules for their conduct. But the break between the colonial era and the postcolonial era was only a prelude to the more profound transition that we are witnessing today: the end of 100 years in which Africa was deemed relevant to the balance of global power and the return to an age in which it is not. What is happening now is nothing less than Africa's exit from "international society." Laurent Kabila cannot be Mobutu Sese Seko because Mobutu belongs to an era when Africa mattered to the world. With the end of the cold war, Zaire's economic irrelevance has finally become its political irrelevance. There are no more pots of Western aid marked for pliant Third World thugs. Laurent Kabila cannot play the old game.

The new game is this. Try to set up a dictatorship without the foreign aid to make it run, and your regime will fracture, likely along ethnic lines, your soldiers will go to war against each other, and you'll find yourself slouching bravely toward Monrovia or Mogadishu. This is the future that awaits Kabila and his fellow anachronisms in places like Kenya, Gabon, Cameroon and Sierra Leone.

The alternative, at work in places like Benin and Mozambique, is a radical, wrenching stab at rejoining the world on the world's terms. It means taking apart governing institutions that operated on the premise that wealth was produced and distributed through control over the state. It means directing funds away from the parasitic political class that infests state-run industries and toward rural health care and primary education. As Ghana-born economist George B. N. Ayittey has noted, it means establishing institutional checks on corruption like an independent central bank, an independent judiciary and an independent press. In short, it means establishing a moral basis for rejoining the international economy.

This is the choice Kabila faces, and the United States should make it as stark as possible. Let us make him and his fellow leaders across the continent an offer. Plunge yourself into the business of transformation, set yourself against the elites who have robbed your country of its dignity, divest yourself of the petty corruptions of office and tell your people the truth about the world's verdict on postcolonial Africa. And we in turn will lift every tariff we have against your goods and wipe away the debts incurred by your predecessors. Both these proposals are finally receiving a hearing in Congress.

And for those who persist in the old ways, let's make their exit from international society explicit. Tell them that they no longer matter to the world politically or economically, that they have no claim on it morally and that they have done this to themselves.

Laurent Kabila's takeover of the former Zaire comes in the infancy of a new Africa, an Africa that is as yet undefined, and that has the potential for immense horror—a continent isolated from the world in a way it has not been for a century. Or there is the other path, a path of economic and moral return, that begins with the formation of honest government. The signs now point toward the horror, not the promise. The prospect should make the leaders of independent Africa shudder. Let us hope it also makes them change. •

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NOTEBOOK

IT TAKES A VILLAGE: At a charity benefit for Save the Children last week, Roger Clinton belted out a tender ballad he wrote titled, "Like You Were My Child." There was only one off note: it turns out one 6-year-old girl is very much like his child—in fact, it seems she *is* his child—and one angry ex-girlfriend is asking Roger to act more like her father. Martha Spivey, who had an affair with the president's brother in 1990, is demanding he fork over $1,059 a month and $78,000 in back child support. After taking a paternity test in September, the 40-year-old presidential brother began paying $500 a month to the child Spivey claims he refuses to meet. Clinton, who married and has a 3-year-old son, has not said whether he will ante up. But as he tours the country, he has included another special tune in his fourteen-song repertoire: "God Bless the Child."

NINE TO FIVE: Scoff all you want, but the presidents' April summit on volunteering is producing results. On May 31, 800 volunteers from forty different companies convened for a day of community service and corporate responsibility in Boston. And what a display they put on: in the span of four and a half short hours, the corps fanned out to, as the event's schedule promised, "plant crops for the hungry, build low-income housing, clean up the Charles River, paint run-down schools and agencies, and much more." And much more? What could top cleaning up the Charles in four and a half hours? Ending illiteracy in a half-hour? Feeding the world's poor in a spare minute? Working at the speed of God allows plenty of time for the real business of the new volunteering: networking. The schedule calls for exchanging ideas about corporate service at the morning's one-hour "VIP Reception" with Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, and the half-hour "Opening Ceremonies" featuring the Master Motivator himself, General Colin Powell. And that's just the events *before* planting crops for the hungry, etc. Afterwards, at 4:30 in the afternoon, their arduous work done, the volunteers decamped to RJ Fitz's for a "Post-Event Celebration"—just in time for happy hour.

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES I: The Supreme Court's unanimous decision in favor of Paula Jones means that the second Clinton administration will be devoted largely, if not entirely, to scandal management. A depressing prospect, but not without its comic media moments. There was *Newsweek*'s Eleanor Clift, interviewed on a Washington radio station, floating the idea of "a constitutional amendment, maybe, to ban lawsuits" against the president. As the nation tried not to think too hard about the president's privates, there was Bob Bennett, the president's lawyer, fielding reporters' questions from a rooftop where—most unfortunately—the backdrop was the soaring obelisk that is the Washington Monument. And, in the online daily magazine *Salon*, there was a piece headlined, "Supremes to Ms. Jones: You go, Paula!" wherein Richard Nixon's White House lawyer, Leonard Garment, offered this advice to Clinton's lawyers: "I think they should get on with it. They're going to look foolish if they try to delay any more. What are they going to do—say that the president doesn't have enough time? The truth is all presidents spend a tremendous amount of time doing nothing at all. Is he going to declare war? Perhaps he could develop a terrible illness. That would get him out of it."

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES II: As pundits mull the impact of the Paula Jones lawsuit on the president's legacy, we can't help speculating on its consequences for the president's private attorney, Bob Bennett. The high-priced superlawyer seems to have failed his client at almost every critical juncture of the case. First, there was the now-infamous press conference in which Bennett insisted Jones's suit was "tabloid trash with a legal caption on it." Next, there were the bungled settlement negotiations, which fell apart after anonymous White House aides continued to trash Jones in print. Finally, Bennett announced his strategy: he would make the sweeping claim of absolute presidential immunity from all civil suits. The gratuitously expansive argument confounded legal scholars and, indeed, was eventually rejected in favor of former White House counsel Lloyd Cutler's more modest proposal that such suits should be postponed until the president leaves office. Now, having lost the Supreme Court argument, the garrulous lawyer is suffering an uncharacteristic bout of shyness. After his ill-fated rooftop press conference, he declined on May 27 to appear on "Nightline" to defend Clinton's virtue, leaving legal reporter Stuart Taylor and Jones's lawyer Joseph Cammarata to maul the president unimpeded. There is, however, one bright spot: Bennett regularly bills his clients for media appearances. The Clintons just saved several hundred dollars.

MISERY LOVES COMPANY: Dinorah Sampson wept last week as she watched the possessions of her beloved ex-flame, the late despot of Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza, get auctioned off to some of his fans. This was the end of a tragic chain of events for Sampson, who says she was swindled by a management company that took her money but failed to make payments on a storage area where her memorabilia was stored. The storage company sold the keepsakes, which included a signed photograph of Lyndon Johnson and a gold-plated revolver engraved with the general's name that went to an auction house for $5,750. Tragic, really, that the poor gal has nothing left to remember her sweetheart. But now she can commiserate with millions of Nicaraguans, who remember when Somoza fled the country after emptying the nation's treasury. •

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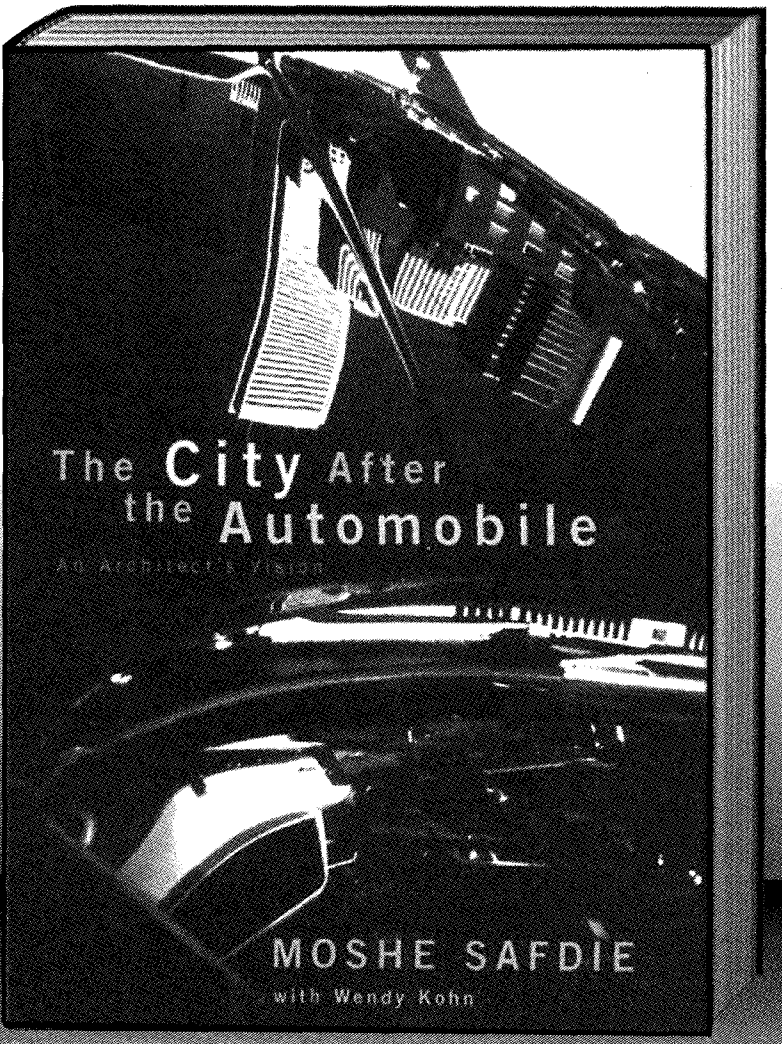

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The Clinton administration's secret deal.

TRICK OF THE TRADE

By John B. Judis

On February 1, in Beijing, Ambassador Rita Hayes, the U.S.'s chief textile negotiator, and her Chinese counterpart, Li Dongsheng, signed a "memorandum of understanding" governing the trade in textiles between the two countries over the next four years. Hayes heralded it as a "historic" agreement. "It is now a situation that we have a level playing field," she said. Echoed her boss, U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky, "This is a solid agreement that meets our critical objectives."

According to Hayes, the Chinese agreed to reduce some of their tariffs on American exports and to cut in 1997 the quotas on textiles imported to the U.S. by 2.6 percent from the amounts negotiated in the last treaty, which expired on December 31, 1996. Over the three years after 1997, however, the quotas would expand by 1 percent a year. That small gain was still enough to win Hayes a standing ovation at the annual luncheon of the American Textile Manufacturers Institute. But, in all the celebration, one odd note was struck: Hayes refused requests from the textile industry and from Capitol Hill to make the memorandum public. This coyness turns out to be understandable.

I have obtained a copy of the memorandum. And it contains a provision, which Hayes did not reveal, that could dramatically undercut whatever gains the administration claimed for the treaty. Indeed, the inclusion of this provision raises serious questions about the Clinton administration's honesty in representing U.S. manufacturers—and, more generally, the national interest—in its negotiations with China.

For the last two years, American textile manufacturers believed that the administration was pursuing two parallel sets of negotiations with Beijing. First, it was negotiating a series of four-year agreements, of which this is the latest, that would limit Chinese textile imports to the U.S. and provide access to the Chinese market for American exports. In 1995, for instance, China shipped $6.6 billion in textiles to America, while the United States exported $64 million in textiles to China. China's textile firms, many of which are run by the People's Liberation Army, could, if permitted, drive overseas or out of business what remains of the American textile industry.

At the same time, the administration was supposed to be negotiating China's entrance into the World Trade Organization (WTO). The charter members of the WTO, which was started at the end of 1994 under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), signed an agreement that would phase out textile quotas in four steps: covering 16 percent of different categories of imports in 1995, another 17 percent in 1998, another 18 percent in 2002 and the remaining 49 percent at the end of 2004. But countries that subsequently enter the WTO must negotiate the terms of their entry with charter members. American textile manufacturers demanded that the phaseout of China's textile quotas begin the day China enters the WTO, and run a full ten years, rather than ending in 2004. "Our position was unanimous," said Ron Sorini, vice president of Fruit of the Loom, Inc. "We have been denied access to their market. It wouldn't be fair to allow them a six- or seven-year phaseout."

According to a lobbyist who was in Beijing, Hayes specifically denied, when asked, that China's accession to the WTO "was on the table" during the negotiations, but the memorandum reveals that, in fact, it was—and that, in fact, Hayes secretly rejected the industry's position without even consulting with or later informing its representatives. The agreement that Hayes signed and that the administration refuses to make public stipulates that, when China enters the WTO, all those "textiles and textile products that are covered by the [bilateral] Agreement ... shall no longer be subject to quantitative restrictions" on the "effective date of their integration" into the WTO's schedule. In other words: once China joins the WTO, it will become subject to the WTO's original schedule for dismantling textile quotas, which will take precedence over the quotas established by February's agreement. If China joins in 1998, it will enjoy an immediate 33 percent exemption from quotas and will, like charter WTO members, be totally exempt by the end of 2004. While winning new limits on China's exports, Hayes appears to have agreed to remove such limits entirely.

Hayes did wring one token concession from the Chinese. According to the memorandum, for four years after the quotas expire under the WTO, the U.S. could still call for consultations with China if it could demonstrate that its textile imports were causing "market disruption." If Washington and Beijing could not reach agreement after ninety days of talks, the U.S. could attempt to impose limits again on China's imports, but the U.S. could not impose quotas for longer than a year without beginning the whole cumbersome process all over again. And China can also protest U.S. action before the WTO, where, to date, the United States has lost, or dropped, every textile case.

Industry representatives I talked to confirmed their belief that the U.S.-China textile talks and the WTO talks were parallel and that Hayes had not negotiated the terms of China's entry into the WTO. "Since I was there, I know what we wanted and what we got," Carl Priestland, chief economist of the American Apparel Manufacturers Association, said. "The WTO negotiations are entirely separate of this negotiation." Was there anything stating when the quotas on China would be phased out? "To my knowledge, they hadn't put anything in there," Priestland said. Carlos Moore, executive vice president

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of the American Textile Manufacturers Institute, and a defender of Hayes, agreed: "There was nothing at stake about the WTO. What we were told was that these were two separate agreements."

Although industry representatives who have seen a pirated copy of the agreement in the last week were outraged, they were unwilling to say so on the record. "This is a problem when your government totally fucks you," said one. "You hear industry say it is progress in the right direction. It's because the people you are going to criticize are the people you have to rely on in the future." Asked about the memo, Hayes, recently nominated to be ambassador to the WTO, declined to respond.

Should the administration and Americans care what happens to the textile industry? There are currently about 1.5 million textile workers, about 20 percent more than the total number of workers employed in computers, software and data processing. Much of the American industry is a high-tech marvel, but it cannot compete with state-subsidized or state-owned industries in China that employ workers at 25 cents an hour. Americans have to decide whether appeasing China is worth the price of losing this industry and its myriad jobs.

More broadly, can the administration be trusted to negotiate any trade agreements with China? Some trade experts on Capitol Hill have argued that the way to get China to remove its massive trade barriers and reduce its surplus with the U.S. is not through revoking China's most favored nation (MFN) status, but through driving a hard bargain on China's entry to the WTO. While China is likely to respond angrily to an MFN cutoff by favoring America's competitors, the Chinese desperately want to join the WTO, where they will no longer be subject to bilateral sanctions. And America's allies don't want to do anything that would drive the U.S. out of the organization. The U.S. could clearly force significant concessions from China without Japan and Europe rushing to their defense.

The Clinton administration invoked this argument last month in justifying its support for the extension of MFN. In a news conference May 19, Barshefsky warned that "revoking MFN would likely stop the progress in WTO negotiations." But, as this secret textile deal demonstrates, the U.S. is not making progress—and, more significantly, is not serious about wringing concessions from the Chinese. The administration's conduct strengthens the hand of MFN opponents who argue that Clinton can't be trusted to negotiate with China and that Congress's only recourse is to block his way.

Indeed, given these events, it must be asked if the administration can be trusted to do anything. Like Nixon's war in Cambodia or Reagan's covert support for the Contras, Clinton's trade negotiations with China have been based on the premise that if the Congress and the public knew what he was up to, it would attempt to stop him. Clinton has chosen to defy presidential accountability. Congress would be wise to ask Clinton, Barshefsky and Hayes whom, exactly, they thought they were representing when they agreed to a secret deal with the Chinese. •

The business cycle meets the spin cycle.

RUN AWAY

By Sydney Freedberg Jr.

The story sounds familiar. A senior executive at a major corporation makes offensive comments to female subordinates. The women take their problem to a second executive, who sits on their complaints. When the story finally comes out, both men are forced to resign. All standard—except for one detail: it wasn't a reporter who broke the story, or the victims' lawyer, or a public-interest crusader. It was the corporation itself.

That corporation is CNA Financial, a big insurance company in Chicago; the two executives were president and chief administrative officer of its highly successful Nashville subsidiary, CNA Life; and the story burst, full-formed, into public view in a press release faxed, unsolicited, to news outlets by CNA's public relations division.

CNA is at the cutting edge of the hottest new trend in public relations: pre-emptive confession. Over the past decade, a new school of public relations theory has given rise to a new subspeciality, one dedicated to the paradoxical proposition that the best way to win a fight is to surrender before it starts. The era of "no comment" has given way to the era of "yes comment." Practitioners call this "crisis management."

The new class of crisis managers claim they have brought an unprecedented degree of openness and honesty to the once-secretive world of corporate affairs. "The best way to handle the media," pronounces PR guru Robert Dilenschneider, of the eponymous Dilenschneider Group, "is to be as open and straightforward and above board as you can possibly be." And not just with good news—honesty is especially important in a crisis: "The first thing you should do is assemble all the facts and get them out as fast as possible.... Find all the people with an axe to grind, and make sure their needs are met." Rich Blewitt, of Rowan & Blewitt, sums up: "Mea culpas are rarely wrong."

The crisis managers' great recent case in point is Texaco. In classic "no comment" style, the oil giant sat tight for over two years while a racial discrimination suit smoldered. Then a disgruntled senior executive leaked tapes that seemed to show his colleagues not only tossing about racial epithets (closer audio analysis contravened this charge) but also planning to destroy evidence. Hostile headlines and a Jesse Jackson-inspired boycott sent the company's reputation, and its stock, down in flames.

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The response, straight out of Blewitt's book: mea maxima culpa. Within eleven days, Texaco CEO Peter Bijur had not only apologized and suspended every individual involved—depriving those already retired of their benefits—but he had closed the original suit with a $176 million settlement, the largest in the history of discrimination lawsuits. The Jackson boycott lifted, the media spotlight shifted, and the fiscal hemorrhaging—which threatened to far exceed $176 million—stopped. Crisis management professionals are unanimous in applauding Texaco's shift of strategy, and its architect, PR high priestess Linda Gosden Robinson.

Well, almost unanimous. "They did a knee-jerk, which was a mindless knee-jerk in my opinion," says crisis management consultant, professor and writer Gerald C. Meyers. "They fell for the public relations catechism of apologize first and think later.... They've got to grow out of this." Meyers seems offended by the new spinelessness of the '90s. Doesn't a company have some obligation to defend its employees? "Bijur," he says, "condemned 27,000 people as bigots by falling for this knee-jerk advice."

Blewitt recalls that, when his firm opened twelve years ago, most of its business came from chemical companies under attack by environmental groups. Now, like Texaco, clients are increasingly the targets of discrimination suits. Other PR gurus agree. The Institute for Crisis Management's statistical analysis of news databases classifies only 17 percent of recent crises as the classic industrial or ecological accident; most of the rest are "smoldering" crises, where employee discontent on an issue of workplace discrimination or harassment grows out of control. Why the shift? In part because society has grown more sensitive on race and gender questions, and in part because the environmental movement has won so many victories. Blewitt believes the chemical industry got itself off the front pages because it genuinely learned its lesson and cleaned up. The implication is heartening: If yesterday's ecological crises taught corporations that the best way to save green is to go green, might today's discrimination suits teach them to embrace the rainbow? Are the crisis management gurus really moral mentors, teaching corporate America to open up, embrace diversity, accept responsibility and reform?

Of course not. Postmodern America has divorced the act of confession from any sense of guilt: Why should corporations be different from individuals? Full disclosure and mea culpa are tactics tailored to the times, just as "no comment" was a tactic for its times. The crucial sign is this: "no comment" is not dead. It is merely buried below the surface of amiable compliance.

Take Robert Dilenschneider. He preaches being "as open ... as you can possibly be" in lectures and books, and practices it in his own consultancy. Just five years ago he was doing the same things as head of Hill & Knowlton, a venerable PR agency where Dilenschneider had spent his entire professional career. He left amid stories that his growth-at-all-costs attitude and his reckless embrace of controversial clients—including an anti-abortion campaign—had gutted both professionalism and morale. He was not open about this then. And he is not now: asked about his past at Hill & Knowlton, the normally voluble and open Dilenschneider immediately goes off the record. Likewise, Robinson won't speak on-record about Texaco, and even Blewitt refuses to name his clients.

No comment or yes comment, public relations is still all about control. The innovation for the information age is simply this: rather than dam the flow of stories altogether, the new crisis managers don't stop a story from getting out, and they don't try to fight against the media pack's conventional wisdom on the story, either. Instead, they go with the flow of the media storyline—in order to fight against the concrete effects of that flow. It's reverse spin.

And it works. On May 13, 1997, Peter Bijur was able to open his speech to the annual meeting of stockholders with this boast: "the value of your shares yesterday hit an all-time high...." As part of Bijur's litany of the successes of this "successful and challenging" year, the CEO touted Texaco's progress toward "our ambitious workplace opportunity and diversity goals": not only the expected roster of "initiatives," but impressive statistics on women and minorities hired, promoted or engaged as business partners—all within just three months. Jesse Jackson, whose Rainbow Coalition had purchased shares so that he could attend the meeting, promised that he would "remain vigilant as we challenge this corporation to set the pace." Really? Is anyone at Rainbow Coalition/PUSH actually keeping an eye on Texaco? The Chicago headquarters switchboard referred TNR to a Texaco expert in the Washington, D.C., office—who turned out to have quit; neither her replacement nor the D.C. switchboard knew of anyone who had taken over the Texaco beat. More calls to Chicago and New York reveal that the Rainbow Coalition has sent Jesse Jackson to the stockholders' meeting; and that's about it. Texaco has spun itself out of the danger zone.

Return to the case of CNA—because that's just what the media haven't done. After the initial burst of articles, the story submerged. In the wake of full disclosure, no one's talking: as of this writing, the company declines further comment, the two executives are unreachable, and the women remain unidentified. "They were very successful in shutting off any more information," sighs David Roeder, a veteran reporter who covered the CNA story—such as it was—for *The Chicago Sun-Times*. The CNA press release is "the only reason" the public heard anything. Rumors circulate—"CNA has always had a turbulent employment record," notes Nancy Kreiter, who monitors gender-related workplace issues for the Chicago-based advocacy group Women Employed—but none breaks the surface. The crisis managers have told their story, and it's over. Happily ever after? We'll never know. •

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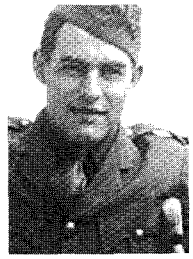
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Paula Jones and the enfeebled presidency.

EXPOSED

By Jeffrey Rosen

Until the Supreme Court decided *Clinton* v. *Jones*, the most memorable description of a lecherous public official struggling to reconcile his public and private roles appeared in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*. "The feelings of a Lord Chancellor who is in love with a Ward of Court are not to be envied," the Chancellor laments. "Can he marry his own Ward without his own consent? And if he marries his own Ward without his own consent, can he commit himself for contempt of his own Court?" "This is what it is to have two capacities!" Lord Tolloller replies. "Let us be thankful that we are persons of no capacity whatever."

The Supreme Court relied on a similarly exquisite distinction between the president's public and private roles on May 27, when it unanimously upheld an opinion by Judge Pasco M. Bowman II of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. Bowman, who had announced in 1996 that presidents have immunity from civil damage suits based on their official, but not their unofficial, conduct, is proving to be the most fearsome nemesis of the Clinton presidency. In a separate opinion made public on May 2, it was Bowman, a conservative Reagan appointee, who endorsed Whitewater Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's claim that the White House had to turn over notes of meetings between Mrs. Clinton, her private lawyer and the White House Counsel. The Court's endorsement of Bowman's opinion in the Jones case makes it more likely that it will endorse Bowman's opinion in the Whitewater case. But, in fact, both cases suggest that disentangling the president's public and private roles may be more complicated than Bowman predicted.

There is something appealing, of course, about the Supreme Court's conclusion that the president, in his private capacity, shouldn't be above the law. And if any presidential behavior is private, Justice John Paul Stevens seemed to suggest in his opinion for the Court, it is sexual advances that take place before his election. For this reason, Stevens predicted, future presidents shouldn't fear that their administrations will be paralyzed by nuisance suits based on pre-presidential misconduct. "Because the President has contact with far fewer people in his private life than in his official capacity," Stevens wrote without apparent irony, "the class of potential plaintiffs is considerably smaller and the risk of litigation less intense."

But there is also something a little glib about Stevens's conclusion that Paula Jones's allegations relate to purely "private" conduct. The implausible core of her legal claim—the allegation that got her into federal court in the first place—is that then-Governor Clinton, acting in his *official* capacity, "under color of state law, deprived her of rights protected by the Constitution." Jones's suit would properly fizzle if she had acknowledged in her complaint that Clinton was acting in a purely private capacity when he made a pass at her: she missed the deadline for filing a sexual harassment claim under Title VII, which regulates conduct between private employers and employees.

The point isn't that Clinton deserves permanent immunity, as governor or president, from Jones's dubious allegations that he acted in his official capacity when he made a pass at her. But now that the private sphere is regulated by "increasingly complex sets of statutes, rules and regulations," as Justice Stephen Breyer put it in his powerful concurrence, which reads as if it were drafted as a dissent, the distinction between public and private conduct is increasingly elusive. And, in an age when our definitions of sexual harassment are expanding so promiscuously that a public official can be accused of violating the Constitution every time he makes a pass, the danger of future presidencies being paralyzed by politically motivated civil suits is more serious than Stevens imagined. "I am less sanguine," Justice Breyer noted pragmatically, that sitting presidents won't become "easily identifiable target[s]."

One way of illustrating the artificiality of Stevens's distinction between Clinton's private and public conduct is to imagine what would happen if President Clinton, tomorrow, made a pass at a White House aide named Paula Jones, and then arranged to have her fired when she rebuffed him. Under the logic of *Nixon* v. *Fitzgerald*, which held in 1982 that current and former presidents have permanent immunity from civil damage arising from their official duties, Clinton could claim, even after he left office, that he was acting at the outer perimeter of his broad discretion over federal appointments, just as former President Nixon did when he convinced the Court that he couldn't be sued for firing a federal whistleblower. But, as Justice Breyer suggested, the *Nixon* decision, which forever immunizes current and former presidents from sexual harassment suits relating to their conduct while in office, seems to place the president above the law far more dramatically than the trial court's decision to temporarily postpone the Jones suit until after Clinton left office.

Judge Bowman's decision in the attorney-client privilege case, like his decision in the Jones case, rests on the premise that the public and private roles of the president and First Lady can be crisply and coherently distinguished. Endorsing an argument that Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr first proposed in March 1995, Judge Bowman held that the White House can't invoke the attorney-client privilege to withhold information from a federal grand jury, because Mrs. Clinton in her private capacity had no "common interests" with Mrs.

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Clinton in her public capacity.

The White House responded that it should be permitted to invoke the attorney-client privilege "not for the benefit of the President as an individual, but for the benefit of the Republic." Even assuming that there should be clearly delineated lines between the Clintons' personal and public lawyers, the White House argued, both groups of lawyers should be able to meet with each other, and with their clients, so that the appropriate boundaries could be evaluated and maintained. But Judge Bowman rejected the argument, holding that "the White House and Mrs. Clinton have failed to establish that the interests of the Republic coincide with her personal interests."

Because the *Office of the President* v. *Office of Independent Counsel* case hasn't yet been thoroughly briefed before the Supreme Court, this isn't the time to examine its complexities. But Judge Bowman must have welcomed the Supreme Court's suggestion in the Jones case that the president's "private acts" deserve no special judicial consideration. "With respect to acts taken in his 'public character'—that is official acts—the President may be disciplined principally by impeachment," Justice Stevens wrote in a passage that may disappoint conservatives who hope that Starr will indict Clinton for false statements in connection with the Whitewater investigation. "But he is otherwise subject to the laws for his purely private acts."

The endless litigation arising from the Paula Jones and Whitewater allegations shows the difficulty of separating the president's "public character" from his "purely private acts." And this difficulty may prove to be the enduring political legacy of *Clinton* v. *Jones*, a legacy as troubling to those who cheered the decision as to those who mourned it. There is, at the moment, a wicked glee among conservatives, who believe that the president is finally getting his comeuppance after years of using public power to escape responsibility for private misdeeds. And there's a certain poetic justice, perhaps, in the spectacle of the Democrats, who supported the reckless expansion of the sexual harassment laws, and of the Independent Counsel statute, now being victimized by their own zeal.

But it is bewildering, in the end, that so few conservatives have risen to defend the Executive against the most sustained assault on its prerogatives in the post-Watergate era. Conservatives in the 1980s defended the glories of a powerful presidency, which they called the "unitary executive." As Justice Breyer noted, scholars such as Antonin Scalia properly insisted on the "constitutional equivalence between a single President, on the one hand, and many legislators or judges, on the other." This led conservatives to argue that the Independent Counsel statute was unconstitutional, and that litigation that might unduly distract the president was impermissible. Now, with the tables turned, the former defenders of executive power are embracing the laws they previously attacked. By the time the Republicans finally win back the embattled presidency, they may wonder whether it was worth the effort. •

Why Africa's new leaders are like its old ones.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE

By Keith B. Richburg

Can a onetime Marxist guerrilla use free-market capitalism to restructure his country's shattered economy? That question, the lead-in to an article I wrote for *The Washington Post* in February 1992, was posed after a trip I took to Ethiopia and Eritrea, following interviews with the two countries' presidents, Meles Zenawi and Isaias Afwerki. Both were Marxist-inspired revolutionaries who went to the bush as young men a quarter-century ago, and who jettisoned socialism in the 1980s as they moved closer to toppling longtime dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam. And the same question can be asked five years later, about another successful guerrilla leader, Laurent Désiré Kabila, who has succeeded, against all expectations, in ousting the most entrenched of Africa's Big Men, Mobutu Sese Seko.

Many have compared Kabila to his chief backers—Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, another former guerrilla commander who has emerged as the darling of the international community for reviving economic growth in that war-ravaged nation, and Paul Kagame, the architect of the Rwandan Patriotic Front's lightning victory over the Hutu regime in Kigali. Stretching both facts and logic, commentators have even termed these

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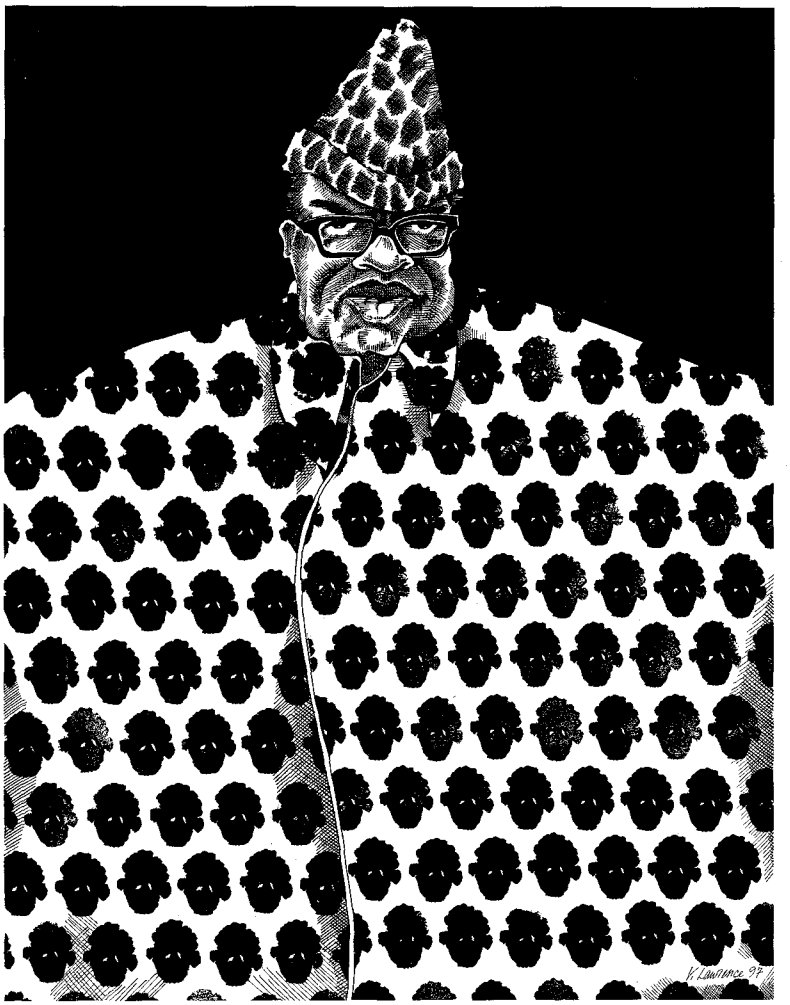
former bush fighters a kind of much needed "new breed" of African leaders—technocratic not tribal, more pragmatic than ideological, and able to speak the language of the World Bank and the international aid community.

But that is far too rosy. Museveni and Kagame are autocratic figures who brook no opposition and seem more comfortable with the strict military chain of order and command than with the compromise of politics. Kabila, who has renamed Zaire the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has already displayed a notably undemocratic streak, barring all elections for two years, suspending all political activity and criminalizing the act of forming a political party, creating a cabinet that excludes some of the key politicians who opposed Mobutu's regime and, in his latest move, banning miniskirts and tight trousers for Congolese women.



MOBUTU SESE SEKO BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

And what has been the international community's response to this new kind of African Big Man? At this point: silence. In many ways, the West, including the United States, seems as willing to tolerate these new "benign" autocrats as they were to embrace their more ruthless predecessors. The old litmus test for Western support was anticommunism; the new version is free-market principles and structural adjustment programs.

By embracing these new autocrats, rather than using aid as a carrot to force democratic reforms, the United States may be squandering its leverage. That's partly the result of an incoherent Africa policy reduced to a series of ad hoc reactions to crises on the ground. By failing to act more forcefully to facilitate dictators' exits from the scene, Washington policymakers surrender the stage to guerrilla leaders who fight their way in from the bush and whose victories embolden them—and make them more resistant to outside pressure. Mobutu will certainly not be the last of the Big Men to fall in this way. Another candidate is Kenya's Daniel arap Moi, widely expected to manipulate his way back into power by rigging elections later this year. Five years ago, writing about Zaire in *The Washington Post*, I said: "Amid the stalemate, analysts say, some Zaireans may consider abandoning their peaceful struggle for democracy and launching a guerrilla war to oust Mobutu." It seemed far-fetched then, just as it seems far-fetched for Kenya today. But it may well come to pass there, as it came to pass in Zaire, unless aggressive, preventive diplomacy forces a managed transition to democracy.

But building democracy in Africa is not a simple proposition. For a start, Western policymakers must recognize that in Africa the holding of elections does not necessarily mean true democracy—in many cases, the exact opposite holds true. Elections in Africa are easily and often stolen, and in many cases serve to allow dictators and military thugs to wrap themselves in a cloak of legitimacy.

Zambia, for example, recently held elections, but the country is far from "democratic" in the sense that the opposition is allowed to freely compete, and the press is free of harassment. Sierra Leone held a democratic election a year ago, but the soldiers just seized power again in yet another coup against weak civilian rule. Elsewhere on the continent, soldiers who have taken power through coups have staged, and won, dubious elections, as occurred most recently in Ghana. In South Korea, former military leaders have been put on trial and imprisoned; in Africa, they simply change into civilian garb, proclaim their newfound faith in democracy, and get themselves "elected."

Before truly democratic African countries can hold truly democratic elections, there is an immense amount that needs to happen: constitutions must be rewritten to reduce the power of imperial presidencies and to level the playing field for opposition parties. Government control over the media must be broken, and that especially applies to the state-run radio stations on which most rural Africans depend for their news. Security and police forces, mostly tools of repression, need to be brought under neutral command and control. Fair and impartial election laws must be drafted. Voters must be

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properly registered and opposition parties given the voters' lists and the locations of polling places well in advance. Mechanisms must be put in place to monitor funding, to prevent entrenched Big Men from simply printing more money to buy more votes. Laws that now make it a crime to "insult" the president must be repealed so opposition candidates feel free to engage in vigorous debate. Voter education drives need to be conducted. And election losers must be given a constitutional role, and thus a stake in the outcome, so that elections no longer become the kind of "winner-take-all" contests that lead to factional warfare. International election monitoring groups also need to get involved much earlier, and on a far wider scale, instead of parachuting into African countries a few days before the votes are cast.

Here, the continent might take a lesson from South Africa, which went through a lengthy process of constitutional revision that laid the groundwork for the eventual, successful, democratic transition. In fact, Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress resisted demands, even from some of the ANC's own supporters, to rush headlong into elections before constitutional arrangements were in place.

But African countries have a problem that runs even deeper than bad government: state illegitimacy. Most of the civil wars and conflicts around the continent are, in some form or another, caused by separatist sentiment, with one ethnic group fearing domination by another. In Somalia, the civil war grinds on in Mogadishu because the two branches of the Hawiye clan, and the subfactions of the Habre Gedir, refuse to cede power or territory to perceived enemies from opposing clan and subclan factions. The minority Tutsi army in Burundi refuses to give any power away to the Hutu majority, and the minority Tutsi in Rwanda, mindful of the 1994 genocide, will not consider real power sharing with the defeated Hutu refugees and returnees. It goes on and on.

For the last three and a half decades, African strongmen have been content to sweep those secession claims under the carpet, or else ruthlessly suppress them. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) has even enshrined as one of its inviolable tenets the idea that the continent's old borders, drawn up arbitrarily by European colonizers, can never be altered. The fear is rational enough; recognizing the claim of any one group could lead to the chaos of conflicting claims. But the attitude is wrong and outdated, and needs to change if Africa is to have any chance at successfully burying its civil wars and entering the new global economic system. Here, Africans can look to the northeast corner of their continent, where, in 1993, little Eritrea broke off and became independent from Ethiopia, and Meles Zenawi's new government in Addis Ababa let it go without much fuss.

But if African countries should consider rational and peaceful ways of breaking up, they must also find new ways of coming together, through stronger regional and subregional groupings. These two ideas—African states breaking up and simultaneously coming together—are not as contradictory as they might appear. They are two halves of an evolutionary process that one scholar, Peter Lyon at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London, refers to as "Fission and Fusion."

"Fission" means that in the absence of any overarching ideology like the East-West rivalry, and as separatist sentiments come to the fore, peoples around the world are expressing more vocally their demands for autonomy and separate statehood. But, at the same time, these demands seem less dire than before as countries become more economically interlinked through groupings like the European Community, the Association of South East Asian Nations, and the like. Quebec might want to separate from Canada, but the consequences of separation would be far less dramatic if an independent Quebec were still a member of the North American Free Trade Area. Eritrea and Ethiopia split, but the two are still closely tied by transport and trade links.

What role can the United States and other Western countries play in building the conditions for regional integration, minority rights and real democracy? One way to start might be to end the annual donor game, where the international lending community insists on economic and political reforms as a condition of continued assistance, and dictators comply grudgingly, at the last minute, just before the aid money is cut off. The money flows for another six months or a year, and the old pattern of repression reemerges, until the ritual is repeated all over again. Kenya's Moi has become the continent's virtuoso of the aid game; he has figured out exactly how much reform is enough to keep the donors happy. And he has also played on Western fears that authoritarian control is the only way to keep African states from falling apart. It's a seductive argument. Northeast from Kenya is Somalia, and northwest is Sudan, both wracked by long-running civil wars. With neighbors like that, Kenya and Moi actually start to look pretty good. This is what Mobutu said as well, and likely what Laurent Kabila will say, too. And so the tyrants whose brutal and impoverishing policies create the conditions for state collapse then use the specter of state collapse to procure the aid they need to hold onto power.

Will the second-term Clinton administration recognize that these Big Men—new breed or old—are not the solution but the problem, and that the stability they impart is illusory? Will it pursue preventive diplomacy to manage Africa's crises before the rebels pound at the capital gates? Or will policy remain reactive and ad hoc? If America's Africa policy continues along its current path, then the headlines and stories coming out of Africa in 2007 will likely be very much like those of 1997. The faces may change. The Big Men may be talking the language of free markets instead of the rhetoric of anticommunism. But Africa's problems will remain lamentably the same. •

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An African American returns to Africa.

GOING BACK

By Henry Louis Gates Jr.

I first visited Africa a quarter of a century ago, and I had longed for that pilgrimage for years. I had become fascinated by Africa as a child living in America in the 1950s, watching Saturday children's programs, such as "Ramar of the Jungle" and "Sheena, Queen of the Jungle." From the Africa of cartoons I proceeded to the Africa of the movies. At the Majestic Theater in my hometown of Piedmont, West Virginia, I watched the now-classic kitsch films *King Kong, Mighty Joe Young, Tarzan* and *Zulu.* The experience of seeing Africa through the eyes of Hollywood was not entirely pleasant. I sometimes found the depiction of Africans on the small screen and the large to be demeaning and insulting. But nothing could really interfere with the allure that this continent of black people and its wonderfully strange animals had for me.

At about this time, *Reader's Digest* featured a story about an African boy who had walked thousands of miles across the continent, hoping desperately to come to America to be educated. I read the piece over and over again: yes, he had *walked,* through bush and jungles, up mountains and across deserts, all to get to America. And there he was, staring up at me from page fifty-nine of *Reader's Digest,* a success story: walked across a continent, adopted by missionaries, sent to the United States to attend school. I read his story again and again, and I remember details of it still. He had been so filthy from his journey, I recall, that the missionaries had forced him to bathe three times in a row before allowing him to try on his new clothes. This boy had risked his life to come all the way to America, and I found myself wanting desperately—at the age of 10—to go the other way.

Reader's Digest began my education about an Africa that was slightly more real than Hollywood's, but still semi-fictionalized, glamorized. This was the Africa taught in school then, a darkly exotic and glorious and dangerous and exciting place, the setting of great adventures and the destination of great adventurers. This Africa, and these men, was epitomized by the inimitable Dr. Livingstone. Geography class, which I loved, was full of tales of the great explorers: Marco Polo, Vasco da Gama, Pizarro, Ponce de Léon, Henry the Navigator—the list was living and noble. But none could rival David Livingstone and his adventures in Africa. For me, Livingstone's passionate campaign against slavery, his ardent love of the mystery and vastness of the continent, with its astonishing diversity of peoples, plants and creatures, his determination to bring "Civilization, Commerce and Christianity" to the dark southern and East African interior, were irresistibly compelling to me.

What fictional story could ever rival Livingstone's "discovery" of Victoria Falls for the white world, his desperate search for the source of the Nile, his mistaken belief that he *had* discovered it, his fever-induced delirium of prayers of thanks to God for allowing him to make this discovery, his death on his knees during one of those very prayers? And, as if this were not enough to fire a schoolboy's imagination, there was the noble act of Livingstone's two faithful servants, who—following their master's command—cut out his heart and buried it in Africa, salted and dried his body in the sun, then carried it in a hollow log for nine months, from today's Zambia all the way to Bagamoyo in today's Tanzania, where it was shipped back to London for a state funeral in Westminster Abbey. Now *that* was a story. Between the passion of that African boy whose face peered up at me from the pages of *Reader's Digest,* and Livingstone's fearless ambition to reveal the mysteries of the Nile, how could a curious little colored boy from the village of Piedmont, West Virginia, resist Mother Africa's lure? I couldn't.

My attitudes toward the continent were not typical. The Negro Americans I knew in those days used to make remarks about Africans as disparaging as those made by white Americans. "I ain't left nuthin' back in Africa," the old saying would go. "Nothing but your soul," Malcolm X would respond a few years later: "Your soul and your names." It was as if Negroes in America felt themselves the vanguard of the African peoples—a

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commonly voiced opinion before 1957, the year of Ghana's independence, even by those who should have known better, such as Richard Wright or W.E.B. DuBois—and as if we needed the "benighted" Africans as a baseline of blackness against which to measure ourselves. No matter how bad things were in America, we seemed to reason, they were worse in darkest Africa. Richard Pryor, in a comedy album based on his first trip to the continent, summed up this attitude with the words: "Thank God for slavery."

I did not share this attitude, despite the fact that I was as eager to be a member of the great American middle class as any of my relatives or contemporaries. My yearning for Africa stayed with me as I grew, and as the new, postcolonial Africa grew. The great year of African independence, 1960, captured my imagination as few other public events had done. Only the civil rights movement loomed as large. I memorized the names of the new nations' presidents and prime ministers and, all too soon, their generals and strongmen. I read avidly about Africa—as avidly as a high-school student in Appalachia could read. Albert Schweitzer at Lambaréné, new heads of state emerging from the Kennedy White House, the crisis over Katanga province, Lumumba's assassination, Mobutu's brutal triumph against democracy, the coup against Nkrumah ending an era of optimism that had lasted no longer than a blink, the murders at Sharpeville, Mandela's imprisonment—all this was Africa to me.

Yale, where I became an undergraduate in 1969, sponsored one of those '60s programs that sent students to work for a year in the Third World immediately following their sophomore year. The sole stipulation was that a participant secure employment for his year abroad, rather than study at a foreign university. Long after the deadline for applications, I was able to persuade a sensitive dean that a year in Africa, structured around the idea of work and travel, would be a meaningful part of my larger education. The dean found most of the necessary funds; I raised the remainder by writing to churches and civics groups, like the Lions Club in my hometown. I secured a job through the good graces of the Episcopal Church. As luck would have it, the "sister" of the Diocese of West Virginia was the Diocese of Central Tanganyika, at that time headed by a missionary from Australia. Our diocese had sent donations quite regularly to Tanzania, and now it would send me.

I set out enamored of Tanzania's president, Julius Nyerere (who held a master's degree from the University of Edinburgh and had translated *Hamlet* into Swahili) and eager to witness *Ujamaa*, the heralded Tanzanian version of African socialism. Nyerere and his compatriots had declared *Ujamaa* to be based upon traditional economic institutions indigenous to a collective and communal black African past. Surrounded, as I was at Yale in the late '60s, by debates over whether capitalism could ever adequately accommodate the economic integration of African Americans, I was intrigued by Tanzania's experiment.

What was Africa to me? as Countee Cullen asked in his poem, *Heritage*. It was not the Africa of the cartoons, or of the movies, or of the adventures of Livingstone, or of radical political theory. I spent six months in the village of Kilimatinde, the home of an Anglican mission hospital where I was trained to deliver general anesthesia and where I lived and worked with Australian missionaries. It was not at all the socialist vanguard I had expected but, rather, a tiny, isolated village made up of deeply devout Christians who were as passionate in their beliefs in God and in an afterlife as they were brutally, desperately poor in this life.

My first night in the village was the loneliest night of my life. Surrounded by illiterate farmers who lived in mud huts and whose sole access to modern technology was a transistor radio, I felt so far away from New Haven that it seemed I had never been there. *Time* magazine, to which the missionaries had subscribed, arrived six weeks late. I'd read it *slowly*, savoring even the masthead and the fine print surrounding each ad, hungry for connection. "Write to me!" I would implore my friends, "cuz I love to read." But I was also desperately hungry for connections with my long-lost African past. "Dear Sly," I wrote in a gush of nationalistic sentimentality to one of my Yale friends, "I'm in the mother country, nursing at the breast of mother Africa." (Two months later, his wry response arrived: "Dear Skip, I've been nursing at a few breasts myself. Get a grip.")

With my kinsmen, there was some common ground: they knew of Muhammad Ali and Dr. King, photos of JFK and Nyerere gracing the walls of even the humblest of huts, the ubiquitous R&B rhythms of James Brown, Otis Redding and Wilson Pickett—these were our familiar reference points. When the missionaries weren't watching, we'd dance together; I discovered that the Funky Chicken was something that some slave had brought with him to America three or four centuries ago, passed down by example, not by blood. And, of course, we bonded over our common enemy, the white man, embodied for us in the pale faces of our pious missionaries, jockeying for eternity by sacrificing their lives for the benighted tribesman. I learned, inevitably, how very American I was. If we were an African people, it was by affiliation, ironic Africans forced to sing King Alpha's songs in a strange land. It is a lesson that I still, I confess, love and study and teach.

I left the village after a few months, eager to return home but not so eager that I could resist my dream to hitchhike across the equator, making my way with a Harvard student I chanced to meet at the docks of Dar es Salaam. I suppose my Livingstone complex was stronger than I had realized.

Last year I went back to Africa, twenty-five years older and accompanied now by my wife, Sharon

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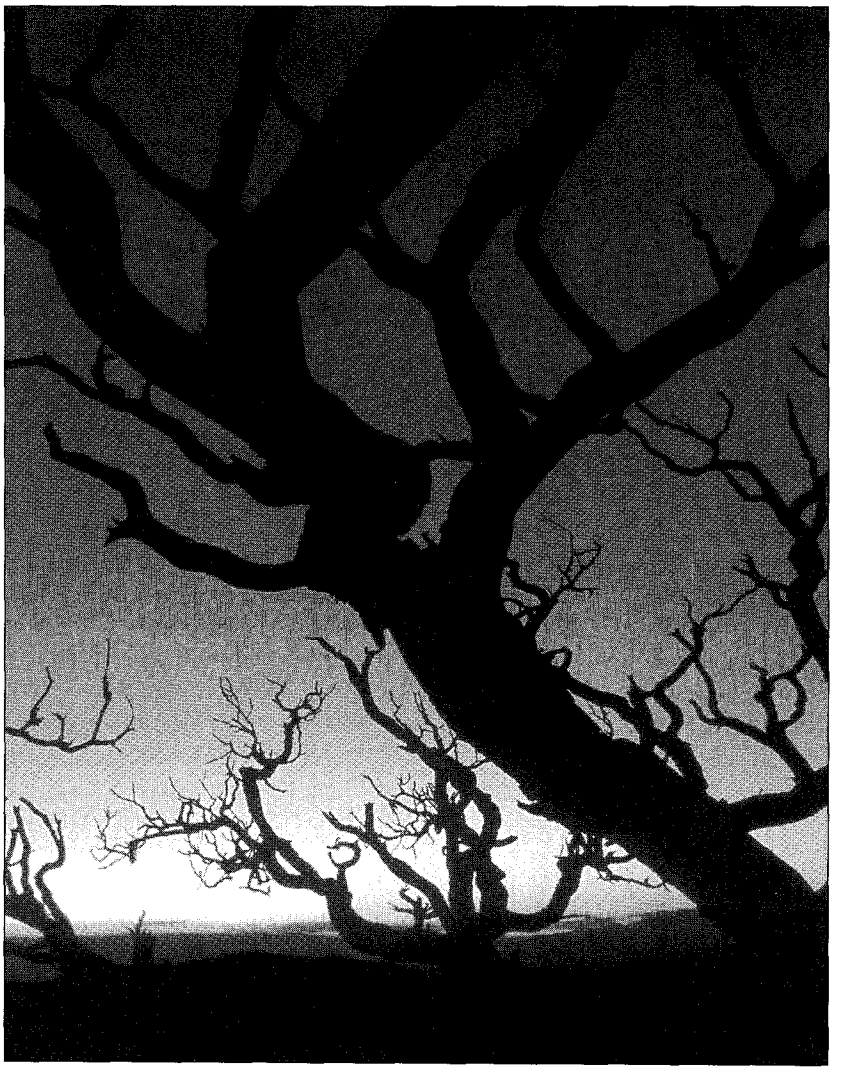
Adams, and our children. A trip to Africa, I hoped, would offer my two daughters the chance to encounter their own African American culture—especially our music and our cultural heroes—in the mouths and on the dance floors of the African cousins they never realized they had. I wanted them to learn that we were no longer Africans, and that we were, at the same time and inevitably, an African people in the New World, a satellite culture circling around a delightfully mysterious and vast continent of black customs, beliefs and cultures.

We decided to structure the trip around the route that Livingstone, my boyhood hero, had taken in his quest to find a transcontinental water route connecting the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic. We started in Zimbabwe, at Victoria Falls, where I experienced the sublime for the first time, I believe, in my life. Terror, beauty and awe: Niagara Falls seemed like a shower compared to this great passage of water.



The contradictions of colonialism are epitomized by Victoria Falls, and they may be seen in living action at the great Victoria Falls Hotel, a vestige of the colonial era if ever there was one. The head porter, who reminded me of my Uncle Jim, told me of his great admiration for Jesse Jackson and Randall Robinson. Of Colin Powell he asked, "Is there a brother under that uniform?" I was astonished at his knowledge of, and fascination with, African Americans, just as I was constantly surprised to hear Michael Jackson's voice booming out of station loudspeakers and transistor radios, and to see Mike Tyson's image used as a logo for makeshift barber shops. Livingstone did not, of course, "discover" the falls. He was taken to them by friendly local Africans whose ancestors had long ago named the falls *Mosi-oa-Tunya*, which means "the smoke that thunders." Why Robert Mugabe and his compatriots did not change its name at independence in 1980, when they rechristened Rhodesia "Zimbabwe," after the medieval ruins, remains a mystery to me. It was here that Livingstone conceived his great dream to bring "Civilization, Commerce and Christianity" to the Africans who had lived here for centuries, hoping, as he did, that what I think of as the three Cs of colonialism could transform the magnificent Zambezi River into a virtual highway for the European scramble to exploit Africa's natural wealth. Livingstone was an ardent abolitionist and inspired almost blind loyalty in his black servants. But his terrible legacy is a century of European domination of black people and their cultures which Europe devalued, maligned, mocked and often attempted to destroy. The huge statue of Livingstone on the Zimbabwe side of the falls, placed there in 1955 by the white South African apartheid government and molded in a neofascist style reminiscent of statues of Marx, Lenin and Stalin in the former Soviet Union, was intended to underscore the complete submission of black Africa to its white colonial past. The statue of my boyhood hero should be removed, and the name of the falls changed to its African original.

Leaving the falls, we boarded a train across the border into Zambia, where we visited the traditional African village of Mukuni. It is ruled over by King Mukuni, who lives in Lampasa Palace, a sprawling ranch-style dwelling made of mud. The palace walls are covered with photographs of his ancestors and colored anthropological drawings of "how our people once dressed," and it is roofed with thatch. This is the home of the Batoka-Leya people, and it has been their home for a thousand years. The king—"chief," he advised me when I inquired, was a derogatory European coinage, meant to diminish the status of traditional African monarchs and to elevate by contrast the status of the occupants of Windsor Castle—is a direct descendant of a millen-

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nium of fathers and grandfathers and their fathers and grandfathers.

This was just the sort of thing I wished my daughters to experience. In King Mukuni, Africa's contrasts rubbed up against one another. The king had been educated at the University of Zambia, where he studied economics. For a brief period, while his father reigned, he worked for British Petroleum. He had visited Britain once, he is a devout Roman Catholic, and he is determined that his village will survive, despite its enormous poverty. "Subsistence farming is our principal occupation," he told me, "but tourism has become our number one crop." He was quite proud of a certificate he'd received for bungee-jumping off the bridge over the falls.

We were welcomed by traditional dancers, two of whom wore bones in their noses. Our audience with the king was preceded by a cleansing ritual in which a priestess "sprayed" us with a sacred potion, spat onto our faces from her mouth. The girls sat crouched in a lotus position, quite astonished at this peculiar form of welcome. "They welcome us by spitting in our faces," Liza would relate to one of her friends back home. Our day at the village ended with the entire village singing "The Noble Leya Anthem," a poignant lament for the loss of *Mosi-oa-Tunya* to Victorian Britain.

"Wouldn't you prefer to be enjoying the luxuries of the city?" I asked, cautiously, as we were leaving.

"I'm at the center of a great civilization here, and I am content," the king replied, as he stood in the dirt, surrounded by the villagers' mud huts. I believed him.

We left Zambia and traversed my beloved Tanzania from its southwestern border to the coast. I was impatient to see Dar es Salaam again, to visit Oyster Bay, the site of the home of the United States Information Service (USIS) director with whom I had lived for six weeks after bidding farewell to missionary life in Kilimatinde. Dar was terribly disappointing: a once clean and lovely city is ramshackle now, its beautifully sited harbor polluted by the direct dumping of raw sewage. Robberies are routine on the beaches, even the beaches across the road from Oyster Bay's great mansions. An air of defeat hangs over the city. Gone forever are the untested dreams of *Ujamaa*, the noble effort to change the nature of African human beings, or to return to some sort of ur-tribal self, called the "African collective," under the direction and guidance of that philosopher-king from Edinburgh, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's first and only president, until he resigned two decades later. Not even this good and decent man could find that collective tribal self and build an economic order around it. He couldn't find it because it doesn't exist.

From Dar, we traveled up the coast to Bagamayo and inland to Kilimatinde, where our journey would end. The trip from Bagamayo took eighteen hours longer than expected because the train in front of us crashed on the single track line. It was almost twenty-five years to the day since I had first arrived there; I was in total shock at how different it was and how very far from home I was. Now I was returning to this tiny world apart, surrounded and protected by my wife and our two daughters.

What had I hoped to find? I am not quite sure. I certainly did not expect Maggie and Liza to bond mystically with their putative African heritage, with a past they never had. No, I think now, in retrospect, that I wanted to re-encounter the shadows of my own quest for clarification of my generation's relation to "Africa," and I wanted to re-encounter that pivotal episode in my education wrapped in the protective armor of my family. Most of all, I suppose, I simply wanted to meet someone who knew me then, through whose eyes I could see myself then, at the age of 19. After much searching, I found my dear friend James Ngoma, who had retired from his position as Charge Nurse only a year ago, and his wife Ruth. They wondered aloud at what had happened to my Afro.

An evil thing has happened to the village of Kilimatinde. The missionaries, with whom I fought so fiercely and so often about politics and their own racism toward the Africans in the village, were gone. Gone, too, were the funds that their churches had sent to maintain the hospital and the homes that formed the compound. A sleepy little village of 500 was now, a quarter of a century later, a desperately impoverished village of 10,000. AIDS is so prevalent that we were discouraged from visiting the hospital where I had delivered general anesthesia for so many operations.

We left Kilimatinde toward the end of the day, driving our Land Rover down the badly pitted road that connects the fringe of the escarpment with the Great Rift Valley, seen through a reddish purple haze as the equatorial sun descended, as suddenly and as absolutely as a stage curtain, at seven o'clock. To my surprise and dismay, I found myself—despite myself—longing for the order and the resources that the missionaries had brought to the Wagogo in earlier years. Their residences, as well as the hospital buildings, were in great disrepair. The standard of living, and the villagers' life expectancy, had not been raised one jot over the past two decades. Looking around the village, I realized that even if the West stood still for a thousand years, my friends in Kilimatinde would never catch up. And the West, of course, will never stand still.

So we had made our curious little pilgrimage: three weeks, three African countries, three thousand miles, and we had never needed our 1-800 family therapy line even once. Throughout our journey I had been plagued by my determination that our daughters should make this trip. Why had it been so very important to me? In Dar es Salaam I had met a white American USIS official who told me of her own concerns about her daughter's familiarity with her father's Indian culture. "The most that you can hope for at your daughters' ages," she had counseled me, "is to plant the seeds." Maybe that is enough. •

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An Olympic bid and the odd new South Africa.

THE NEW GAMES IN TOWN

By Peter Beinart

Think of South Africa as a country that grew drowsy around 1945 and drifted off to sleep. It closed its eyes sure of the world around it, a world in which it played a respected, progressive role. A charter member of the League of Nations, and then of the United Nations, it had bound with the other white dominions to preserve Western civilization during World War II, and shared with them an identity defined by the liberal habits and heritage of the British Commonwealth.

Perhaps in the twilight of a deepening oblivion, South Africa felt this world begin to shake under the weight of an African nationalism unleashed partially by that very defense of enlightenment principle. But, by the time the rumblings grew deafening, and overturned the entire well-mannered, self-satisfied edifice, South Africa was fast asleep. And, as South Africa snoozed, there arose, from Khartoum to Lusaka, an African identity built on the negation of its predecessor. The heady and headstrong leaders of the day vowed to build nations not merely free from colonialism, but free from the West's stale, corrupt model of economic development and social organization.

One has only to recite the names from that era—Kenyatta, Azikiwe, Lumumba—and then from ours—Moi, Abacha, Kabila—to see that this vision lies in ruin. In Mozambique, where Eduardo Mondlane won a brutal war of attrition against Portuguese rule and became a hero to radical intellectuals throughout the globe, the dirt-poor government of Joaquím Chissano now solicits its former masters to rebuild along the Indian Ocean shore the luxury hotels that once symbolized colonial privilege. Zambia and Tanzania, which at independence hatched grand schemes to rediscover the socialist principles supposedly inherent in African tradition, now compete for the mantle of the International Monetary Fund's most dutiful pupil in Central Africa. And these are the bright spots. The countries that have not submitted to Western economic orthodoxy—Nigeria, Congo, Sudan—find themselves in such advanced states of decay as to raise the question of whether they remain, in any meaningful way, states at all.

Black South Africa, awaking to take its place as an African, rather than an imperial, nation, finds the African identity that it cherished during those long, brutal years of sleep a corrupted and diminished inheritance. And so it has rejected it. Rather than assume an identity based upon economic and cultural isolation from the destructive West and a search for authentic, self-sufficient development, the African National Congress has embraced its reverse. The identity it is building is in large part an appropriation of the West's understanding of, and prescriptions for, Africa. As a result, the new South Africa, contrary to all expectations, is being shaped by those best able to anticipate and deliver the South Africa that the West desires. The center of this effort is Cape Town, and, if all goes according to plan, its showcase will be the Summer Olympics in 2004.

A decade ago, almost no one in South Africa thought the future would look like Cape Town. When South Africans imagined their country under ANC rule, they imagined Port Elizabeth, a gritty, industrial city smack in the middle of the Xhosa (and ANC) heartland of the Eastern Cape, a city consumed by the ANC-inspired civil unrest that led, in 1986, to the declaration of a national State of Emergency. Or they imagined Johannesburg, where a mighty ANC-aligned labor movement, its soul in the mines, contested white South Africa's control over the means of production. Or perhaps a few imagined Durban, where Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi plotted an alternative (ostensibly more moderate) black South African future based on the political exploitation of Zulu nationalism. A South African joke of the mid-1980s: How can you tell a white South African optimist from a white South African pessimist? Answer: the optimist is learning Zulu while the pessimist is learning Xhosa.

But Cape Town, capital of the Western Cape, was home to neither language. The Western Cape is the only region of the country without an African (or black) majority. Of its residents, 55 percent are "coloured," a sprawling, Afrikaans-speaking apartheid category that encompasses the descendants of the indigenous, non-Bantu peoples of the Cape, the descendants of Malay and Indian slaves imported by the Dutch in the eighteenth century, and anyone legally acknowledged as the product of racial misce-

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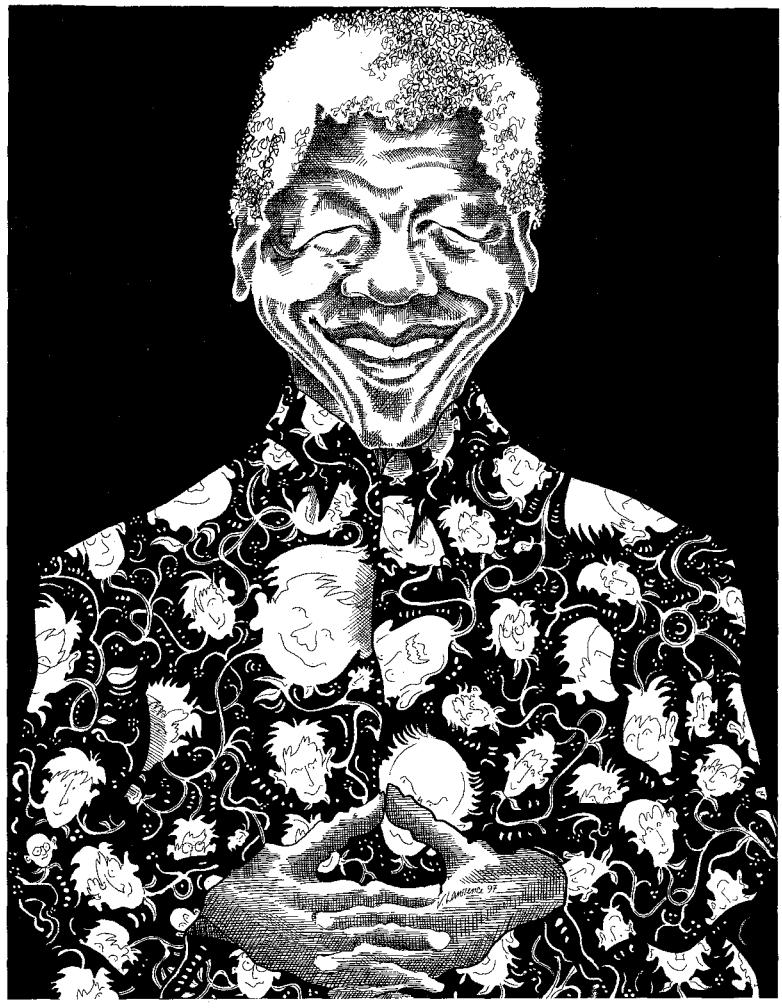
genation. Coloureds, deeply ambivalent about the prospect of African rule, wielded little power within the ANC and none within Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party. And Cape Town, a sleepy agricultural and tourist city bordered by a ring of mountains and two oceans, boasted little heavy industry. So Cape Town was by its demography, its history and its geography peripheral to the black politics forged in the cauldron of State of Emergency South Africa in the mid-'80s. And it was from that cauldron that everyone assumed the new South Africa would arise.

And so it would have, had the African National Congress overthrown the South African government. But—and this is the key to understanding how Cape Town emerged as the model for post-apartheid South Africa—the ANC did *not* overthrow the white government. To be sure, a rich mythology, influential both inside and outside South Africa, suggests that it did. According to the lore, the ANC's bombing campaign, run from exile in Lusaka, in tandem with the street warfare of its young comrades in the townships, and its efforts to stigmatize Pretoria internationally, forced F.W. de Klerk to negotiate the handover of power from a position of weakness. In essence, this is the familiar African story of negotiations as a fig leaf for the transfer of power to a triumphant nationalist movement able to cripple white authority through guerrilla war and mass mobilization. It follows the ANC's long-standing belief that apartheid was simply "colonialism of a special type" and would fall in much the same way as its white supremacist cousins north of the Limpopo River.



NELSON MANDELA BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Were this true, Cape Town might still be a backwater. As it actually happened, however, the South African government did not hand over power from a position of overwhelming weakness. By the late 1980s, when secret talks with the ANC began, the government's news blackout had exiled its abuses from the world's television sets, and South African business had found ways to evade sanctions; while sanctions distorted the economy, they hadn't really cut into white standards of living. The guerrilla campaign waged by the ANC for a quarter century had proved almost totally ineffectual. Chased by the apartheid military from every country on South Africa's border, the ANC was marooned in far-off Zambia, from which infiltration into South Africa was extremely difficult. The desperate, brutalized township kids who screamed Nelson Mandela's name and set collaborators alight were also reeling from P.W. Botha's 1986 declaration of a State of Emergency, which left them facing not police vans, but tanks. By the time of Mandela's release in 1990, rising civil violence, a declining economy and international isolation had left white South Africa depressed and neurotic, but the edifice of white power was simply too sophisticated and entrenched to collapse like a Latin American junta or a colonial outpost. The bureaucracy remained intact, business elites had not fled, and the military and police, even with their large numbers of black foot soldiers, remained loyal. As ANC military chief Joe Slovo conceded in 1992, "we are not dealing with a defeated enemy."

There is another reason the revolutionary model of the new South Africa did not come to pass. By the late 1980s, much ink had been spilled, both inside and outside South Africa, arguing that the white government, with its theology of racial classification and hierarchy, was on the wrong side of history. But so, it turned out, was the ANC. Through the end of the decade, the ANC's blueprints for South Africa's development sounded as if they had been photocopied from a Bulgarian economics textbook. The party lionized East German dictator Erich Honecker and in 1990 noted with sadness "the loss the liberation movement has suffered with the disappearance of the German Democratic Republic...." In October 1991, Harry Gwala, then-ANC boss in Natal, writing in the Congress's official journal, *Mayibuye*, condemned Mikhail Gorbachev and "[t]hose who employ bourgeois morality and imperialist norms in dismembering

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a socialist union and suppressing the Communist Party...."

By the early 1990s, while South Africa's white elite was realizing it had to abandon its dream of racial separation, the ANC was realizing it had to abandon its dream of state-directed wealth redistribution. Soviet money had dried up, and the Congress, looking at Africa's wretched socialist orphan states, realized that, if it was to gain the Western blessing (and money) it needed to govern, there was no choice but to conform to Western requirements for an economy based on the free market.

The ANC's realization in turn freed de Klerk to make a decisive strategic break with his predecessors. White leadership had long sought to co-opt blacks politically and thereby legitimize South Africa to the world. In that vein, they had proposed various absurd scenarios—separate parliamentary chambers for different racial groups, black representation on meaningless advisory committees and township boards—to bring blacks into office while denying them power. F.W. de Klerk's epiphany was to realize that these schemes were no longer necessary. Free elections no longer represented a threat because an ANC forced to accept the logic of capitalism would not substantively endanger white privilege. As University of Cape Town political scientist Hermann Giliomee has written, "In the government's perception the ANC without Soviet backing was a containable force."

It was these realities that shaped the compact hammered out during secret talks with the imprisoned Mandela, and then during four years of raucous multi-party negotiations. And that compact represents, in sharp contrast to the romantic tale usually told about South Africa's transformation, a significant victory for the white establishment. The ANC does not rule South Africa, at least not by itself. It rules in coalition, no longer with the National Party, which left the government of national unity two years ago to define itself in opposition, but with the entire white power structure. The ANC oversees a military whose top officers are largely holdovers from a defense force that hunted them as criminals. Its policies are implemented by a mostly white civil service. The doyens of South African industry have funneled millions into the ANC's campaign coffers, and Nelson Mandela regularly receives members of the prestigious Brenthurst business group at his home. The Anglo American Corporation, the mineral empire long demonized as the economic backbone of apartheid, last year bought itself into the bosom of the new government by selling Cyril Ramaphosa, the ANC's former secretary-general, and Nthato Motlana, Mandela's doctor and confidante, at below market price an Anglo subsidiary worth 10 billion rand ($220 million).

It is not, of course, that there has been no change in South Africa. The emotional and psychological magnitude of a democratic election and an ANC-led government is immense. But while that government remains a potent symbol of the African nationalist vision the ANC upheld throughout its exile, its policies represent, in large part, the renunciation of that vision. The ANC's first budget actually *reduced* corporate taxes, and its tight fiscal policies have cut South Africa's budget deficit from 6.9 percent of gross domestic product the year before it took over to 5.1 percent this spring. Last fall Mandela's government went further, announcing an even more austere budget aimed at reducing the country's deficit to 3 percent by the year 2000. And far from nationalizing the banks or the mines, as it pledged during its decades in exile, the Congress is actually moving toward privatizing the South African telephone company and other state-owned industries.

The strategy of sophisticated white elites, to bring South Africa back into the world's graces by coupling real political change with a lack of real economic change, has worked. Mandela's policies are, if anything, more pro-free market than those pursued by de Klerk. And while this is probably a good thing for the country's long-term future, it is still deeply disillusioning for ANC leaders and supporters who for years took it as axiomatic that free elections would mean a massive effort to reduce the economic gap between whites and blacks. As Tokyo Sexwale, premier of Gauteng, the region encompassing Johannesburg, exclaimed in December 1994, "are we in power or are we in office?"

It is this new South Africa, one that few would have predicted, that the world will mark if Cape Town hosts the 2004 Olympics. In March, Cape Town made the International Olympic Committee's first cut, and this September the IOC will choose from among the five finalists. Cape Town is the sentimental favorite, and its promoters are selling its bid as a celebration of South Africa's reintegration into the continent, and of Africa's coming of age. Their logo is a torch with its flames colored in the hues of the South African flag tracing the outline of the entire continent. The attached slogan reads, "Thousands of years ago the continents divided and went their separate ways. Now it is time they return to Africa." South African National Olympic Committee President Sam Ramsamy told United Press International that holding the Olympics in Cape Town would represent a triumph for "South Africa, Africa and for the progressive forces of the entire world."

The Olympic bid paraphernalia mirrors the vision of post-apartheid South Africa nurtured by the ANC during its exile: a country awaking from its white, imperial identity to a pan-African one. On the ground, this identity is indeed being forged. Go to Johannesburg (the hub of a province that has changed its name to Gauteng, Sesotho for "place of gold") and you will find yourself in perhaps the first legitimately pan-African metropolis. Whites have deserted the city for increasingly autonomous suburbs. They may still drive into underground car parks, from which they

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take elevators up into high-rise offices, but the street is all African. In recent years, Johannesburg has been flooded with immigrants from throughout the continent, from Mozambican mineworkers to Ugandan doctors to Zairean traders. Nigerian smugglers have turned it into a major cocaine hub, and refugee intellectuals from Africa's dictatorships have made it a center for exile dissent rivaling London and Paris.

But it is Cape Town, not Johannesburg, that gained the right to bid. And Cape Town, a city long viewed by its white residents as "Mediterranean" (a statement as much about race as about climate), is the major South African city least evocative of the African nationalist vision of a post-apartheid order.

The Western Cape was the only region de Klerk's National Party won in the 1994 elections. And that victory has given political manifestation to its cultural difference. In the Johannesburg airport, you can find not only "township" music, but the music of artists such as Salif Keita from other parts of the continent. In the Waterfront, the vast mall that houses Cape Town's Olympic Bid Committee headquarters, the music selection sounds like something you'd hear in Peoria. Soccer stadiums regularly draw huge, predominantly black crowds in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Durban and Bloemfontein, but the African Cup of Nations, which South Africa recently hosted, didn't schedule a match in Cape Town. Whites are increasingly migrating to the Cape, and it has long served as the white vacation hub. But Johannesburg's burgeoning black middle class, seeing the city as inhospitable, hits the beach in Durban instead.

And the uncomfortable truth of Cape Town's "pan-African" Olympic bid is that the city was chosen over Johannesburg and Durban in large part because of its "non-African" features. Johannesburg, with one of the highest murder rates of any city not currently at war, was deemed too violent. Cape Town, on the other hand, has, as former Mayor Gordon Oliver says triumphantly, "traditionally always been much safer than other parts of South Africa." Indeed, the city recently loaned beleaguered Johannesburg some of its police force. As South African-born political scientists Kogila Moodley and Heribert Adam suggest in their excellent book, *The Opening of the Apartheid Mind*, the Cape may be becoming South Africa's Slovenia.

Much of the criminality that plagues Johannesburg is really the continuation of violence that began during the State of Emergency in the 1980s, violence then deemed "political," and which ANC leaders admit played a crucial role in wresting control of the townships from the government. So Cape Town, a city that was not at the forefront of antiapartheid resistance, and indeed voted for the party of apartheid in the 1994 elections, is being rewarded for it.

Beyond its safety, Cape Town is considered a better tourist city than Johannesburg. It has a more temperate climate, and, while Johannesburg's scenery consists largely of mine dumps, Cape Town boasts a wide variety of mountains and bays. But here, again, the criterion is ironic. Throughout its exile, the ANC, like other African liberation movements, espoused a self-reliant development strategy centered on heavy industry. Now that same ANC, spouting the IMF line, spurns heavy industry for tourism. Mining, based around Johannesburg, and long the backbone of the South African economy, has been growing less competitive internationally, and tourism, long reviled as fostering a degrading, neo-colonial ethic, now lies at the core of the ANC's economic plan. Despite rhetoric about integrating South Africa into the continent, the Olympic bid is part of a larger effort to lure Americans and Europeans to Cape Town, a city they appreciate precisely because of the "non-African" features about which its white population has long boasted. This is hardly the vision of the new South Africa nurtured by the ANC's commandos when they sat in squalid camps in far off Zambia.

The new South Africa, bitter though its ironies may be, is far preferable to the alternatives—and the alternatives are on grisly display to South Africa's north. But the compact undergirding the new South Africa—which requires blacks to accept not only that staggering inequities persist, but that they *must* persist, and that those responsible for these inequities continue to wield substantial power—depends on a patience that may already be starting to wane. The National Union of Miners, long an ANC ally, has attacked the government for its policies of "IMF-style, neo-liberal deregulation." The popular black newspaper *City Press* has written that "constant claims by senior party leaders that they cannot undo the damage of apartheid overnight do not appeal to the people. They want to see clear proof that a new government is in power." And the business magazine *Financial Mail* has warned: "there is a schism developing between the ANC-aligned masses and those elected to represent them."

Chris Ball, the Olympic Bid Committee's head and a millionaire banker, seems to understand. He conceived of the bid because he believed, in the words of an aide, "eight or nine years after the elections things would start slowing down and some of the enthusiasm would come undone, and this would create a new energy, give people something to focus on, to mobilize forces in a focused way." It may work, except that Cape Town's Olympic bid actually embodies the hard realities from which it is meant to distract. If Cape Town does indeed host the 2004 Olympics, the organizers will claim the games symbolize the triumph of African nationalism, but the Western tourists, statesmen and businessmen who attend, as well as white South Africans themselves, may listen and smile, believing that it represents instead their quiet triumph of co-option. •

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THE HARD QUESTIONS

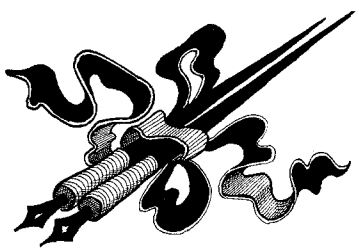
Sacrilege

Growing up in America, I pretty much took the death penalty for granted. To be sure, it was a bit hard to square with the Scriptural injunction—Thou Shalt Not Kill—and even harder to work out in light of the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, but it seemed nevertheless the only appropriate punishment for the likes of Charles Starkweather and the killers of the Clutter family memorialized in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood.* The bloody images of these murders stalked my childhood, perhaps because the killings took place not so far from my hometown in Timnath, Colorado. Starkweather, who had shot and killed more than ten people, was finally captured in Wyoming; to this day I recall the moment because the High Plains, including Colorado, were on alert worrying that Starkweather and his running companion might "come our way." Surely, I figured, communities were better off rid of such folks.

But there were other images, too—not just from the Scriptures but from the 1958 film *I Want to Live!,* for which Susan Hayward won a best actress award. Hayward played a prostitute who had been framed for murder and sentenced to death. With her high heels and brassy manner, she was not a good 4-H girl, or what my friends and I imagined we would grow up to be. But she was also a mother, and, unlike Starkweather, she hadn't murdered anybody. And the state put her through slow torture, one day scheduling her execution, the next day postponing it. I was haunted by the stark black-and-white image of her as she was being led into a gas chamber. But I thought the best way to reconcile these conflicting images was that killing Susan Hayward was a misapplication of the death penalty; frying Starkweather an appropriate punishment.

Then, when I was 18, I read Albert Camus's "Reflections on the Guillotine," and I've never felt the same—at least not on this issue. Despite many subsequent provocations—what do you do with the likes of Jeffrey Dahmer?—I remain convinced by Camus that the state cannot be the divine taker and giver of life as part of its penal powers. In the past several decades, churches that historically favored the death penalty—most notably the Catholic Church—have come to share Camus's position and renounced the moral justification for capital punishment. Forty years after Camus, Pope John Paul II argues that the human body is a gift of life that ought never to be treated cheaply or cruelly. And though working from a somewhat different set of assumptions, he affirms Camus's great insight: the state, or any other political body, can claim for itself only penultimate, not ultimate, power.

According to Camus, this doesn't eliminate a community's right to self-defense. But where the matter at hand is crime and punishment, there are other ways to protect the community from murderous miscreants. Instead, what Camus means is that the state must not be an absolute value; it cannot arrogate to itself the power to kill definitively. Camus is not moved by flabby sentiment. He develops the pro-death penalty side and moves with surgical precision to defeat each argument on its own terms. Deterrence? There is no evidence the death penalty ever made a single murderer recoil; in fact, the prospect of death may exercise a tremendous fascination on the criminal mind. An edifying example of community justice? If so, why then do we hide electrocutions from the public?



Let's be clear about what is happening, Camus argues. Executions are a matter of cold premeditation. The state "kills to support a hypothesis": X number of murderers will be deterred by committing one real "administrative murder." Unlike Starkweather's bloody spree, the state's killing is meticulously planned. The condemned person is led to an almost antiseptic chamber, where he is strapped down and injected with sodium pentothal or electrocuted with 2,000 volts. Because the task is so grotesque, no one person is assigned culpability. Indeed, the tasks are gingerly parceled out: one fastens arms; another legs; and so on. Camus insists that we make a wager on life, not death. Not from sentiment, but in the name of "logic and realism." Camus knows that human beings are not naturally good. He is no romantic. But the evil that men do should not be compounded by administrative revenge. "Compassion," he writes, "does not exclude punishment, but it suspends the final condemnation. Compassion loathes the definitive, irreparable measure that does an injustice to mankind as a whole because of failing to take into account the wretchedness of the common condition."

Then Camus makes a move that draws him and John Paul together in what many might find an odd coupling. State idolatry, Camus insists, has rushed in to take the place of faith. That explains why so many "humanists" have supported public executions—children of the Enlightenment leading the way to the "blood-stained gallows." Having killed the king, and indirectly God, man deifies himself and makes his own ends absolute. But "reasoned pessimism," Camus writes, should make us especially wary of our own designs. "We know enough to say that this or that major criminal deserves hard labor for life. But we don't know enough to decree that he should be shorn of his future—in other words, of the chance we all have of making amends."

The problem is that the state has given itself over to the "follies of sectarianism or of pride." The upshot? The dangerous assertion that "a man must be absolutely cut off from society because he is absolutely evil." This amounts "to saying that society is absolutely good, and no one in his right mind will believe this today." Indeed, the guillotine never purifies. It is a logic that only compounds the horror.

Why, then, do so many decent people believe in the moral justness of execution? For one thing, it seems to right a wrong. The punishment appears the only way to "fit" a horrible crime. Oklahoma City comes to mind, of course. But how on earth will executing Timothy McVeigh, assuming he is found guilty, expiate for 168 deaths? Will the moral universe be thereby righted? Remember, for Camus, the problem isn't so much the death of a single repugnant individual. It is instead the presumption of ultimate state power that lies behind it. That and our all-too-human fears that beneath the surface of every crime lurks the possibility of widespread social chaos.

Camus criticizes societies in particular that have established systems of civil and criminal law yet persist in *seeing* themselves through the lens of Hobbesian insecurities. John Paul reminds us that it is human rights activists in desperate situations of lawlessness—unlike anything we in settled regimes face—who are often among the most ardent opponents of the death penalty, not just because they understand the ways in which it is deployed to destroy political opposition but because it promotes and deepens the law of retaliation as the way of human political life. And so, even after the sanguinary images of Starkweather have given way to those of Oklahoma City, I'll stick with the logic of Camus.

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Stage-struck

Sidney Lumet, now 73, is one of the few active American film directors who started in the theater. Lumet was a boy actor in the Yiddish theater—his father was eminent in it—and at the age of 11 he moved into the English-language theater. When he was 13, he was in a New York production directed by Max Reinhardt, *The Eternal Road.* After four years of war service (a radar man in India and Burma), he established himself as a TV director in New York, then, with some friends, formed a theater group. Among the plays that he directed were Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma* and Camus's *Caligula.*

In 1957 he moved into film with *Twelve Angry Men,* and while his cinematic skills constantly developed, his pictures showed a continuing love and use of the theater. Some of the actors with whom he has worked: Ralph Richardson, Christopher Plummer, Al Pacino, Peter Finch, Jason Robards, Paul Newman, Judith Malina, Marlon Brando, Anna Magnani, Vanessa Redgrave, Irene Worth, Armand Assante—not many film directors have so consistently preferred theater people. Some of the plays he has filmed: *The Iceman Cometh* (for TV), *Long Day's Journey into Night, The Seagull, Equus, Child's Play, Deathtrap*—not all of them successfully transferred but all confirmed Lumet's persistent drive to weld the two arts.

This theater-fealty is underscored by the way he controverts a received idea about film. It's generally held that words are the enemy of cinema, the fewer words the better the film. But Lumet loves speech, loves speeches. He often lets a scene absolutely ride on a long speech. The splendor of sheer address always seems fruitful to him *cinematically.* Lumet is much concerned with contemporary morality, and often that concern is articulated through legal stories. Why? Because trials, and all the meetings surrounding a trial, involve speeches. Think of Newman in *The Verdict,* his blasting of the corrupt judge, his summation to the jury. These, among many Lumet scenes, are instances of theater powers at the service of film.

Look now at Lumet's latest film, **Night Falls on Manhattan** (Paramount), which he himself adapted from a Robert Daley novel. Look at the cast and his use of them.

The film begins with a tight close-up of Paul Guilfoyle, who can speak, addressing an audience. The camera pulls back from the close-up (a typical Lumet maneuver) and we see the setting. Guilfoyle is an assistant D.A. in New York, explaining the facts of life, of their lives, to a group of new assistant D.A.s. Thus the picture starts with a charge of words, and thus Lumet informs us that this will be a filmic film in which words will matter.

Then there's Ron Leibman, fresh from his snarling wildcat Roy Cohn in the Broadway production of *Angels in America,* spinning off much in the same vein as the chief D.A. After the major crimes early in the story, his tirade to his staff and to relevant police people is the vulgar, violent counterpart of a *Henry V* incitement. Again Lumet relies on *speaking* to make the scene.

Richard Dreyfuss, versed in theater, plays a defense attorney who takes on the case of a drug dealer accused of murdering police (we've seen the dealer do it) because he wants to expose police complicity in the matter. Dreyfuss, who knows a lot about playing for the camera, also knows how to play for an audience at the same time.

And there's Ian Holm, currently appearing as King Lear in London, who, so to speak, stopped off en route in order to play a veteran Irish-American New York detective for Lumet. We have only to hear Holm complain in his first line "I'm drinkin' too much cawfee" to sense the pleasure that he and Lumet are getting out of this transformative performance. Holm has no really big speeches, but he moves through a sizable part like a skilled surgeon moving through a complicated operation.

Lena Olin began as a member of the Royal Dramatic Theater in Stockholm and is still a member. Here she plays an assistant to Dreyfuss who becomes romantically involved with the D.A. opposing Dreyfuss. Olin is in some degree wasted here. Lumet was clearly counting on her to provide texture for a fairly trite role, the experienced woman who is attracted to a man but is wary of love, and Olin certainly provides a presence; but the script doesn't make enough use of her.

However, the script is not the film's chief weakness. The picture is enfeebled by Lumet's defection from his theater principles. He cast Andy Garcia in the

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Brassed Off. *An English mining town, 1992, with the colliery's brass band as a symbol of labor and other struggles. Some hokey touches, but generally stirring. (Reviewed 6/9/97)* **The Designated Mourner.** *A spoken "chamber music" trio written in vernacular "music" by Wallace Shawn, elegizing the end of our civilization. Mike Nichols is particularly fine. (3/24/97)* **Ponette.** *French. Chiefly notable for phenomenal Victoire Thevisol, a 4-year-old as a child who has lost her mother. (6/2/97)* **La Promesse.** *Belgian. In an industrial slum a warped youth finds something other than his accustomed life through the example of an African woman. A very large achievement with small means. (5/26/97)*—**SK**

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leading role, the son of Ian Holm's detective, an ex-cop who finished law school and became an assistant D.A., then is elected chief D.A. Garcia simply can't speak. He doesn't relish words, the *chance* to speak. Lumet has evoked much from Garcia in purely filmic acting. For instance, the moment in which Garcia, sitting next to his wounded father's hospital bed, breaks down, making not a sound, just bowing his head, is utterly true and moving. But he doesn't have any theater in him, and the part depends on it—the courtroom speeches and the harangues elsewhere. Garcia has no real relationship with his audience in those moments, as every good theater actor has. Imagine (a younger) Newman in the part, in such a scene as the closing speech to a fresh crop of assistant D.A.s, and you have a different picture.

About filmmaking as such, Lumet knows all there is to know, and a bit more. His book *Making Movies* showed this fact on paper, and now he takes it even further. With the masterly cinematography of David Watkin and the acute editing of Sam O'Steen, Lumet uses Manhattan and its environs as if he were choreographing buildings and streets. Within that large choreography, there are many fine touches. See how, in an Olin-Garcia scene, after some difficulty between them, she just comes up to him and snuggles against his back. See the way a detective, exposed as corrupt, begins to smile—a smile of hopelessness—and carries that smile through to his finish.

The plot is about drug corruption in New York, especially police corruption by the drug traffic: how some cops, small in total but large in stain, further threaten the already harassed rule of law. The novelty in this plot—and every such story tries to have some novelty—is the investigation of a father by his son.

The moral dilemmas of the story are worked out with the usual naïveté on the protagonist's part, i.e., he ultimately reaches the point of view that most of us had before we saw the film. There are hopelessly corrupt people and there are spotless people, and then there are most of us, who, often in the very process of keeping clean, incur sticky obligations. The picture's title, more accurately, would be *Night Never Quite Falls on Manhattan.*

All in all it's a moderately gripping Lumet "theater" film about New York, which is a pretty good thing for a picture to be. And it has a lyrical start and finish. Under the credits at the start and the close, a bluesy trumpet solo. Perfect. •

Mindy Aloff on Dance

Hot Eire

When Michael Kidd, the choreographer of such movies as *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* and *Guys and Dolls,* received a special Oscar for choreography this year, he suggested in his acceptance speech that, by paying him tribute, Hollywood may have been acknowledging the loss of the movie musical, which once made people happy through singing and dancing. Joy in dancing, especially in mass entertainment, is usually an allegro matter: fast stepping with continuous shifts of weight, a reliable meter against which the choreography plays off its variations, brilliant footwork and, if one is lucky, the chance to compare men and women in similar if not identical techniques. It is also a matter of fantasy and symbol-making, of romance and fun, and hope.

Dance fans tend to be happiest when it is the dancing itself that gives rise to the symbols, as in many of the Astaire-Rogers movies, but they can be stimulated in other ways, too. In the 1940s and 1950s, Fred Astaire, Donald O'Connor and Gene Kelly explored the fantastical possibilities of turning their allegro solos into symbolic duets by dancing with props that could be more easily manipulated than people and still produce a romantic effect. In *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), Kelly brought this line of inquiry to a delirious apogee when, in his solo to the title song, he danced with a series of props and set pieces, culminating with an exuberant foray into a puddle of water, the most compliant and labile partner in the history of the movie musical. (A quarter of a century later, in *Vienna Waltzes,* which tips a hat to Hollywood, Balanchine raised the level of fantasy even higher by setting a waltz for Suzanne Farrell partnered by a pillar of air.)

The movie musical declined precipitously during the 1960s, along with the Broadway musical. Both of them were

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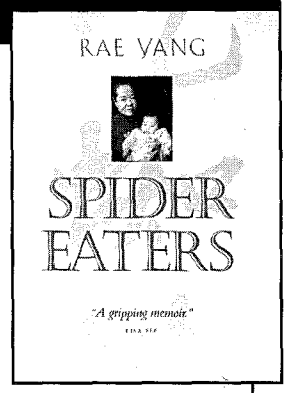

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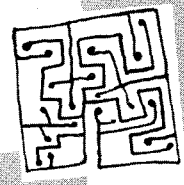

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stranded by the public's taste for hard rock, which doesn't provide the variety of meters that fosters step-dance discipline. And, in the realm of symbols, the very notion of happiness became equated with anti-intellectualism. The most potent cinematic retort to *The Sound of Music* (1965) was *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), the Stanley Kubrick picture that, with wicked precision, trashed and trounced every value that the Old Hollywood attempted to put over. Kubrick's meticulously crafted cinematic choreography for the gang rape to the title song of *Singin' in the Rain* seemed unanswerable, and it effectively skewered the musical for an entire generation.

A Clockwork Orange set a precedent for anti-romanticism in the movies from which they have yet to recover, and, although it may have cleared away a lot of calcified goody-goodism, it also paved the way for new predations—such as several recent Dustbuster commercials for television, where Astaire solos from *Royal Wedding* and *Easter Parade* have been cynically altered to show him partnering the company's handvacuum, a symbolic degradation so outrageous that Jim Carrey was assigned to denounce it at this year's Oscar ceremonies.

There were backstage musicals—for instance, Bob Fosse's *Cabaret* and *All That Jazz*—in the 1970s; but, unlike the Astaire-Rogers pictures, where dancing was social and articulated unspoken feelings, these theatrical musicals made it professional and emblematic of libido and ambition. With the success, in 1977, of *Saturday Night Fever*, and its score by the Bee Gees of songs associated with the Hustle (a kind of touch dance related to the mambo), there was some hope that movie musicals as a genre could be revived with contemporary characters who were not by obsession dancers. But, despite a string of subsequent hits, such as *Dirty Dancing* (1987), featuring social dances in one form or another, the hopes were never realized. When "ordinary" people danced in the movies of the late 1970s and '80s, they were merely hard at work, producing performances in which the sweat became the star. A little like Dr. Johnson's dog, what mattered was not how well they did it but that they did it at all.

This year Woody Allen has made another try at a revival with *Everybody Says I Love You*. Scene by scene, he wins battles: the pas de deux for himself and Goldie Hawn carries so many references to famous movie dance numbers that it serves as a kind of Rosetta stone for the delights that dancegoers mourn. But I think he lost the war. His movie musical was deliberately, proudly backward-looking. To make his fantasies work, he had to use musical standards of the distant past, to acknowledge that he was engaging in an act of nostalgia. But nostalgia is a variety of exclusiveness. Somebody is always left out; and Allen's nostalgia drew a dividing line right through his possible audience. The triphopping disco that teens and twentysomethings are inventing dance steps to in New York clubs today and the groin-to-groin pas de deux that they rely on are so far removed from Allen's sensibility that he doesn't even attempt to present them in parody (as, for instance, *Funny Face* parodied the finger-snapping jazz dance of the Beats). His musical Manhattan is an escapist's dream and a studio accountant's nightmare.

If the movie musical—which is an extremely expensive investment under the best of circumstances—is going to succeed, it must bring in viewers whose only experience of Astaire is the technologically engineered sight of him dancing with an advertiser's product, and somehow convince them that there's more to happiness than that. Is there a hero who can draw the sword from the stone? One candidate has presented himself for consideration. His name is Michael Flatley.

Flatley is an Irish-American champion Irish step dancer, a champion boxer, a virtuoso flutist, and a member of Mensa; and he is bidding to bring back the fantasy of dancing, and the virtuosity, for the movies, with an appeal to a mass audience—which, in the 1990s, means an audience familiar with rock videos. "In the future, Michael Flatley may direct his ambitions toward the big screen. It is hard to imagine his meeting anything but success," is how he announces his ambitions in the souvenir book to *Lord of the Dance*, his two-hour, self-produced extravaganza, built around his star personality, that is currently touring the United States. You may have seen him, with members of his company, at the Oscars, where they performed briefly during the sequence to introduce the award for film editing. Their appearance had the punch of a commando hit squad: we're in, we're on, we're outta here—Irish dancing, and don't you forget it!

Flatley and his dancers did manage to rack up a few points. They showed that technical expertise exerts an irresistible fascination (Flatley's company is stocked with competition winners and advised by the teacher and choreographer Marie Duffy, co-director of the Ealga Academy of Dublin)—even when the subject of that expertise, in this case Irish dance, is perhaps the last thing on an audience's mind. They provided a showcase for Flatley's own charisma and technical bravura. (He can cram so many taps into a step that he's listed in *The Guinness Book of World Records*.) And they suggested that the language of Irish dance—so long associated with restrictiveness, understatement and sanctimony—can be thrilling and sexy without the assistance of production elements more elaborate than blunt lighting changes, even though men and women are dancing side by side with little movement in the hips or, much of the time, the upper body. In the context of the Oscars, Flatley and his company provided a forceful and serious advertisement for their style as well as for themselves. A viewer might well ask whether, in this medium of advertisements, there is anything substantial to the product.

An expert in Irish dancing might begin to examine Flatley's choreography on its deepest level—its relationship to its music. The best that I can say is that in the shows and films that Flatley has to his credit—*Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*—the choreography at times feels obligingly drawn along musical lines, while at other times it ignores the music completely. In creating the effect of detachment, Flatley may be an innovator, but he is a brutal one. For the musical saturation of Irish dancing is, by tradition, among the most "Irish" things about it. John P. Cullinane's painstaking and, so far, uniquely comprehensive two-volume study of Irish dance, published within the past decade, traces the history and the dissemination of the style in Ireland, Scotland, Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia; and foremost among his points about the dancing's integrity is that everywhere the fiddlers (and the pipers, and the other instrumentalists) have called the tune.

The rhythms and the economically shaped melodies of the reels, the hornpipes and the jigs that constitute Irish dancing's musical literature have provided comparatively strict guidelines for the way the dances look and sound. Within the strictness is room for suggestion: both men and women learn slip-jigs, for example, but their light, playful quality has made them more or less a women's dance in competition and performance. It is also possible to spot ancient evidence of a cosmopolitan past. Cullinane sifts the music and the dances for influences from Scotland, from the Cossacks of Russia (whose dances Irish sailors could have learned) and from France. As the jazz dance historians Marshall and Jean Stearns have demonstrated, Irish jigs themselves can be spotted this way in American tap dancing, which continues to preserve their

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rhythms, their verticality and their in-place solitude. (Tappers as different as Bill Robinson and Gregory Hines embody this on film. *Riverdance* on stage includes a turn for American tappers, too, though the film does not.)

Cullinane speaks of social dance for groups practiced in Ireland for hundreds of years, but he dwells on the solo step dances, which, apparently, were the prime focus of archaeological energies during the Gaelic Revival Movement early in this century. These are the dances that have become the chief objects of the prize-giving competitions in Irish dance, which have closely determined the development of the style since the 1920s. The spatial containment of the solos is, to an untrained eye, the most striking quality of this dancing after its rhythmic magnetism. The importance of solo work to Irish dance may be an effect of itinerant dancing masters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who spread dancing (and fencing and other cultural pursuits) to the rural corners of the country. Often, they would teach in the kitchens of farms, where the top of a double door would be set down on the earthen flooring for the student to practice and the master to invent new steps.

This image of high-spirited, musically driven dances bubbling up from severely handicapping circumstances seems fitting, at least in metaphor, to the element of austerity of Irish style. The restrictions help to call attention to the powerful, steadying rhythms and the Irish dancer's appetite for step invention. Still, one can see how a star of titanic force might chafe against them, to the point of revolution. Flatley, who long ago mastered everything traditional that could be learned, is in a position to be the perfect firebrand, throwing off confinements and thereby igniting a passion for Irish dancing among nondancers worldwide.

After spending considerably more time with Flatley's work, however, it remains a question to me whether he can rise above his pursuit of commercial success to produce a show or a film in which the style is not ultimately exploited for the sole purpose of stardom. Flatley has been receiving artistic accolades for years, through his sensational (and winning) performances at Irish dance competitions and through his recognition among other artists in the form of public awards and fellowships. He first came to mass market prominence in 1994, with a seven-minute capsule Irish dance revue for the Eurovision Song Contest. That little spectacle, called *Riverdance,* became the two-hour show, which is reported to be taking in more than a million pounds a week in box-office and video sales and related merchandising. Flatley was the choreographer for the extended *Riverdance,* and with Jean Butler—a New Yorker and a former student of Donny Golden, Brooklyn's Irish dance master—one of its original stars. After about a year, Flatley was fired from the show. (The issues seem to have been money and artistic control.) He turned around and created his own show, *Lord of the Dance,* with whose dancers he appeared on the Oscars.

I have now seen the live stage version of *Riverdance* on its second American tour, without Flatley; the *Riverdance* video from the show's first season, with Flatley and Butler in a performance at the Point Theater in Dublin; the live stage version of *Lord of the Dance,* and the video of it. The best experience by far was the one that is only recapturable on tape: the video of *Riverdance* in its first year. Butler, a redhead whose beauty sends one back to Greer Garson for comparison, is a treasure: strong yet not hard, with a delicacy of tread and a spontaneity in performance that makes her Flatley's stylistic superior. She shows a dance without selling herself at the same time. In their duets, Flatley can't dominate the stage; he must share it, and it seems to have been a useful brake for his hamminess, which explodes in his duets with another woman, a flamenco diva, where his posturing courts embarrassment.

In the current live version of *Riverdance,* Colin Dunne has taken over Flatley's role, with a welcome forbearance, yet also at the expense of the chemistry that Flatley and Butler displayed together. Butler, still with the revue, now dances in an ether of isolation, even when she has a partner. To make her duets with Dunne viable, the entire show would need to be overhauled. Dunne's essentially understated presence can be charming, but not for the rock video audience to whom Flatley was appealing when he put together the original numbers. In the *Riverdance* video, one sees an esoteric dance form (and hears an esoteric song form) magnified, amplified and injected with a welcome streak of impish sexuality. In the show without Flatley, the perfect balance of purity and fun, tradition and contemporaneity, has gone askew. It is now a sour brew of sanctimony and belabored glitz, with an electric fiddle and amplified castanets.

Meanwhile, *Lord of the Dance,* the show that Flatley put together after his blow-up with his first show, contains brilliant moments, for soloists and for the corps de ballet. For the latter's choreographic patterns, Flatley appears to have turned

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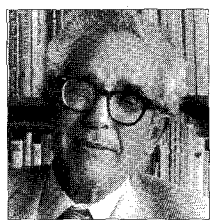
We Are All Multiculturalists Now



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to traditional contradances. Their packaging, alas, is disgracefully cynical. The emeralds are embedded in cowpies because, it is assumed, the great unwashed wouldn't recognize their value any other way in the vast theaters where the show must play to earn back its investment. At Radio City, video screens were positioned on either side of the stage, and I can attest that they were useful. For the first half, I sat in the last row of the orchestra, and wouldn't have been able to see a thing without them at certain moments. When I moved near the front in the second half, I lost nearly all view of the dancers' feet, and of the choreography, too.

Lord of the Dance is strung on a story that purports to be a thriller about the forces of evil (a gang of men in black masks) who menace the forces of good (Flatley and some of the women). The evildoers break a good sprite's flute. Flatley takes on the gang by himself, is duly captured and prepared for some sort of barbecue, is saved by the good sprite and repairs her flute. After a couple of flirtations with the female soloists, he leads everybody in a thundering finale. Nobody on stage or in the audience takes the story seriously for a minute: it's a pretext, the way stories in pornography are pretexts, for physical displays—in this case, of technical prowess as well as energy and stamina. The story is not only ludicrous in itself, it is also a terrible theatrical solution to the problem of how to make moral points about dance style to viewers presumed to have the attention spans of copulating mice. In attempting to manipulate symbolic elements of the narrative to point up dance niceties, the show also manages to serve up patronizing stereotypes, as well as to send mixed messages about virtuosity and performance style.

There are two kinds of shoes worn in Irish dancing, and two sorts of techniques to go with them: hard-soled oxfords, which encourage batteries of tapping, and soft-soled slippers, which permit more refined transition passages, encourage aerial work, and, in those moments when the dancer rises onto high three-quarter point, call attention to the prodigious strength in the dancer's foot and, by implication, to his or her entire technique. Both men and women learn hard-sole dancing; but one tends to see women only in soft soles in performance. In *Lord of the Dance*, Flatley makes brute equations between hard-sole dancing and masculine power, and between soft-sole dancing and femininity. When the women don hard-sole shoes, they become sexually and emotionally questionable within the confines of the plot; the more challenging their routines in hard soles, the less desirable they are to the Flatley hero. This undercurrent of ambivalence is brought to a comic-book climax when Flatley dances with the two female soloists: a blonde in a white dress who wears soft soles (Bernadette Flynn) and a brunette in red, with plunging cleavage, who wears hard soles (Gillian Norris). Torn between them, he makes a decision to embrace the first and to spurn the second.

Now, Flatley may be crass for cash, but he's no stupe. In Irish dancing, women in both techniques customarily wear black tights, and for the purists in the crowd he has retained that costuming. From the waist up, he winks in effect, he's appealing to the lowest common denominator of taste, which will fill those 6,000 seats; but from the waist down, he's not making a sexual choice, really—all the women in the company wear black tights, all are technically adept and therefore sexy—but rather an aesthetic one. He is revealing that under all the commercialism is a point of view about Irish dancing's theatrical possibilities: about the need for a balletic distinction between male and female techniques that will assist choreographers who attempt to enlarge what is essentially a soloist's art form with an element of partnered romance.

In the abstract, his perceptions are pathbreaking. In practice, they become so reductive as to suppress the individualities of nearly every performer in the show, except for Flatley himself. The men get a chance to break loose as figures of devilish glee, and they obviously relish what they do, yet Flatley always wins in competition against them. In terms of both the plot and the dance material, he always makes them look like schoolboys. Had he cast himself as the leader of the gang, rather than the noble hero, he would have at least given his foremost male soloist, Daire Nolan, the current gang leader, a shot at complexity. When the devil is the star virtuoso, the hero would need to prove himself by his actions, thus according some dignity to the story, and by his demeanor, thus according some dignity to the performer.

Instead Flatley grabs it all, impersonating a figure who is supposed to be pure of heart while getting to kick up a storm in black leather pants, his bare chest glistening with sweat. He gets to be Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader at the same time. The women simply suffer, without exception. When they're "good," they look like zombies; when they're "bad," they perk up for ultimate rejection. To put over what Flatley would like to convey about the need for technical distinctions requires the sensibility, the wit, and the musicality of Astaire or Balanchine, a temperament that can entertain the idea that hard soles and soft soles, or adagio and allegro, or solo dancing and partnered dancing, can each produce princesses as well as beautiful dangers. Instead, Flatley displays the sensibility, the wit, and the musicality of a Dustbuster.

Ronan Hardiman, the composer of the original score for *Lord of the Dance*, has put together a shrewd pastiche of tunes for the show and wonderful musicians play them. Yet the sound also seems sheathed in plastic and spurious sentiment—more so than the commissioned score for *Riverdance* by Bill Whelan. In live performance this is not as much of a problem as it is on the video, which isn't the worst dance picture I've ever seen—one does glimpse dancers in action for seconds at a time, at least—but still bodes ill for the prospect that Flatley might be charged with directing or producing his own musical. At the Oscars, it was unclear to me why he and his dancers were positioned during the award for film editing. Having seen the video, which has some of the most belligerently intrusive film editing of dance to be seen this side of *Hair* (which managed to botch the choreography of Twyla Tharp), my heart sinks.

The *Lord of the Dance* film takes as its subject a performance of the stage show at the Point Theater in Dublin, a blatant slap at the *Riverdance* video. Artistically, there is no comparison between the two: *Riverdance* shows dancers dancing, *Lord of the Dance* shows eyebites of dancers dancing. The latter is a presentation piece for how soft focus, overhead camera angles, relentless cutting, and other high-tech procedures can be as destructive to dance when a coarse motive is overseeing them as they can be helpful in the presence of a team that seeks to preserve something of the spirit. To slow down a danseuse so that her body balloons through space like a blimp insults the music, the choreography, and the dancer herself. To show us Flatley's tapping from below, through a transparent floor, so that the taps are coming at us like rabbit punches, makes the dancer's speed simply illegible. The video, which could have sharpened the stage show's dance priorities and made the dancing more intimate, instead chooses to drive home the dumb story. Dancing doesn't seem to be among its priorities at all.

Is there life for Irish dance without Michael Flatley and his legacy? Not on the scale of a mass audience; but, yes, there is. Recently, at the 92nd Street Y in Manhattan, I attended an elegant program of American folk music and danc-

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ing called *Music in the Barn*, which included lovely performances of soft-shoe work by a 9-year-old girl and hard-shoe dancing by a soloist named Ira Bernstein. Bernstein is known to New York audiences not only as a devoted practitioner of all forms of step dancing, but also as a producer of revues that intermingled them: Irish, flamenco, Kathak from India, jazz-tap. He produced these programs in New York during the late 1980s and early '90s, and he became identified with the idea of cross-cultural percussive dance conversations through them. *Riverdance*, which features Irish dancers "speaking" with flamenco dancers and American tappers, made me think of his shows, and I asked him whether he knew Flatley. It turns out that he does: in the early '80s, Bernstein, Flatley, and some other dancers held a jam session to trade ideas. (Among the Irish dancers whom Bernstein presented over a decade ago, incidentally, were Jean Butler and Donny Golden.)

Although Bernstein will not say that Flatley was influenced by the ideas that Bernstein was trying out in the New York concerts, he did admit that he, Flatley, and the other dancers brainstormed about ways to present step-dancers that might be innovative, enlightening, yet true to the dance materials. Bernstein is not a phenomenon, like Flatley, but his love (and his respect) for the music and the dance makes an immediate connection to audiences of all ages and translates as a laconic grace. At the Y, moreover, he showed a theme-and-variations wit in his choreography that lent the steps luster and appeal. I cannot understand—I will never understand, I guess—why one needs elaborate scripts and cluttered production elements for dancing that, performed to marvelous, tuneful music, speaks for itself. That's what the movie musical once offered. You can't reinvent it; like Brigadoon, you can only hope to find it in your lifetime. Maybe the movies, which have tried just about everything else, will turn away from their cash registers and stumble into the magic again, but not in this life, and not under the lordship of Michael Flatley. •

The ruin of Nigeria, the ruin of Africa.

The Threat of Death

By David Rieff

Not even God is wise enough.
—Nigerian proverb

I.

The hangmen who, on November 10, 1995, carried out the execution of the Nigerian writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his colleagues from MOSOP, or the Movement for the Salvation of the Ogoni People, the militant tribal advocacy group that he had helped to found five years earlier, were flown into the southeastern Nigerian city of Port Harcourt, where the doomed men were being held, from the far north of the country. Since hangmen are not in short supply in any region of Nigeria, it can be taken as read that the decision to use outsiders was based on the assumption that as northerners, and as Muslims, they could be relied upon to have not a flicker of sympathy for the Christian southerners whose judicial murder they were to carry out. And they passed this test of loyalty to the dictatorship of General Sani Abacha, himself a northerner. It was only the killings themselves that they bungled.

Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues were arrested in May 1994 on charges of having murdered four Ogoni tribal chiefs who had opposed MOSOP's activities. They were tried by a special tribunal and condemned to death. It was generally assumed, abroad and in Nigeria, that the Abacha regime was divided about what to do with Saro-Wiwa even after the death sentence, and so it would move slowly. Since the Nigerian army again took control of the country at the end of 1983 (the only respite was a three-month-long return to civilian rule at the end of 1993), each of the generals ruling over Nigeria has been more brutal. Babangida turned out to be worse than Buhari, and Abacha has been the worst of all. Yet even Abacha does not rule on his own.

A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary
by Ken Saro-Wiwa
(Penguin Books, 238 pp., $10.95)

The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis
by Wole Soyinka
(Oxford University Press, 170 pp., $19.95)

For the elite whose consent Abacha needs to govern, the execution of Saro-Wiwa posed risks. It was one thing to send forces into Ogoni territory, as the Nigerian state had done in 1993 and 1994; but it was quite another to kill a man who had many friends and supporters abroad. In other cases that had drawn criticism from abroad, the regime had compromised. The other miscarriage of justice that excited interest in the West, the life sentence handed down against General Olusegun Obasanjo, another military leader who had been Nigeria's president, was eventually commuted to a prison term of fifteen years.

To the end, there were rumors in Nigeria that Abacha was trying to cut a deal with Saro-Wiwa, as he had done with many other opponents from within the Nigerian elite. Others believed that the Shell Oil Company, whose despoliation of Ogoniland in the Nigerian southeast had been the focal point of MOSOP's protests, would persuade Abacha to spare Saro-Wiwa's life, if only to spare itself the certain prospect of the renewal of protests and the surprisingly effective boycott that Greenpeace had mounted in 1993. Shell had been coping with other public relations problems, and it did not need more bad publicity.

It turned out that these relatively sanguine assumptions did not take into account what Wole Soyinka rightly identifies in *The Open Sore of a Continent*, his remarkable book on the collapse of Nigeria, as the Abacha regime's determination "to make it impossible for the victims of oil exploration to present a united front in their demands for reparations for their polluted land, a fair share in the resources of their land, and a voice in the control of their own development." Having tried, and failed, to stifle the movement through terror, and having imposed direct military rule on Ogoniland, with a similar lack of success, the regime opted to kill its leader. It hoped that, with Saro-Wiwa dead, MOSOP would wither, and Shell, which had with-

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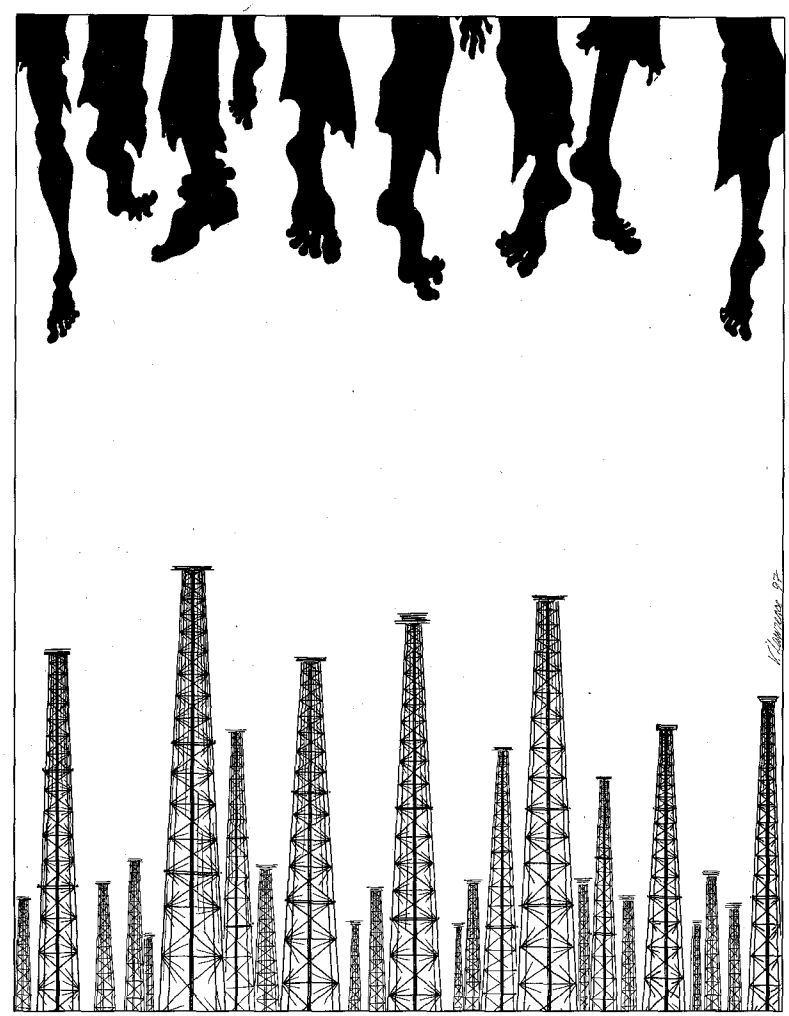
drawn under pressure from Ogoniland in 1993, would resume its operations.

For the Abacha regime, the stakes could not have been higher. Oil has always been the lifeblood of the Nigerian state. Nigeria is the world's ninth largest petroleum producer, and Shell is by far the most important petroleum company operating in the country. A typical leaflet issued by Shell, at the height of MOSOP's campaign, was titled *Nigeria and Shell: Partners in Progress.* In reality, as even Shell officials conceded, the tensions in Ogoniland had hardly been invented by MOSOP. As a Shell "Briefing Note" put it in 1993, people throughout the oil-producing areas believe that they "are not getting a fair share of the oil revenues." The company insisted, though, that this was none of its concern. Saro-Wiwa, it argued, was trying to "internationalize the problem." Shell was simply trying to do its work in what it referred to as "a difficult operating environment, much of it swamps." As for the Ogoni's complaints, they were "Nigerian problems."

Saro-Wiwa claimed repeatedly that the Anglo-Dutch multinational had behaved with particular callousness in the Niger River Delta. He was right. Unfortunately, and this excuses nothing, Shell's conduct was not very different from the conduct of other oil companies in places where they were free to operate more or less as they pleased. Oil companies have earned a particularly bad reputation in this regard, as the recent attempt of Unocal to expand its operations in Myanmar demonstrated once again. Indeed, almost all multinationals involved mainly in the extraction of natural resources in Third World countries exhibit abysmal standards on political and environmental issues. The reason is simple: their only need is for a secure environment in which to mine or to drill. They are not trying to create markets in the countries in which they are operating, and so they do not trouble themselves about the social requirements of a market. All they need is a crude political stability. A terrorist kleptocracy will do nicely.

The notion that these swamps were the Ogoni's homeland, and that Shell's operations were gradually making great areas of it uninhabitable, is never mentioned in the company's brochures and press releases. Saro-Wiwa, a Shell official once wrote, is either "a mild nuisance or a great threat." Although they have never admitted as much publicly, there seems to have been some division within Shell over whether Saro-Wiwa represented a threat or a nuisance. Shell officials monitored Saro-Wiwa's activities with increasing alarm and mounted a campaign in Europe and North America against MOSOP's claims; but how seriously they took MOSOP is unclear.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The Nigerian authorities seemed to have had no such doubts. Shell's drilling operations might have despoiled Ogoniland, but the revenues that the Nigerian federal authorities received from oil-related activities, one-half of which came from Shell's operations (they also generated 90 percent of the country's foreign exchange), were all that stood between the regime and economic collapse. At a time when, as the saying went in Lagos, "this country dey as if e no dey" (this country was as good as dead), the Abacha regime needed desperately to increase oil revenues. It could not tolerate the prospect of seeing the cash impeded by the civic activism of small delta tribes such as the Ogoni.

Even many opponents of the regime found the Ogoni question somewhat distant and mystifying. As Soyinka observes,

> for the majority of Nigerians, Ogoni is only some localized problem, remote from the immediate, overall mission of rooting out the military from Nigerian politics, rescuing the nation's wealth from its incontinent hands, and terminating, once and for all, its routine murders of innocent citizens on the streets of Lagos and other visible centers of opposition. The massacres in Ogoni are hidden, ill-reported. Those that obtain the just publicity of horror, mostly in government-controlled media, are those that are attributed to the Ogoni leadership movements, such as MOSOP.

The news, in 1994, that Ogoniland had been declared a military zone under the direct rule of a federally appointed "Task Force on Internal Security" was greeted indifferently in most parts of Nigeria. And when reports began filtering back to Lagos that in Ogoniland whole villages were uprooted, there was little public outcry. Soyinka saw clearly that, as he puts it, "Ogoniland is the first Nigerian experimentation with 'ethnic cleansing' "; but ordinary Nigerians in Lagos often read about violent incidents whose perpetrators cannot be identified. In 1994, a number of apparently unprovoked attacks on Ogoni villages in which hundreds of people were slaughtered was described by the Nigerian government as the result of "disputes" with other villages. How the attackers got their hands on sophisticated weapons, and why the local Ogoni police were ordered out of the area before the attacks, was never discussed.

What happened in Ogoniland in the early 1990s, once the Nigerian authorities realized that local opposition to the despoliation of the region was growing stronger, was a massive campaign of state terror in which the state-run media

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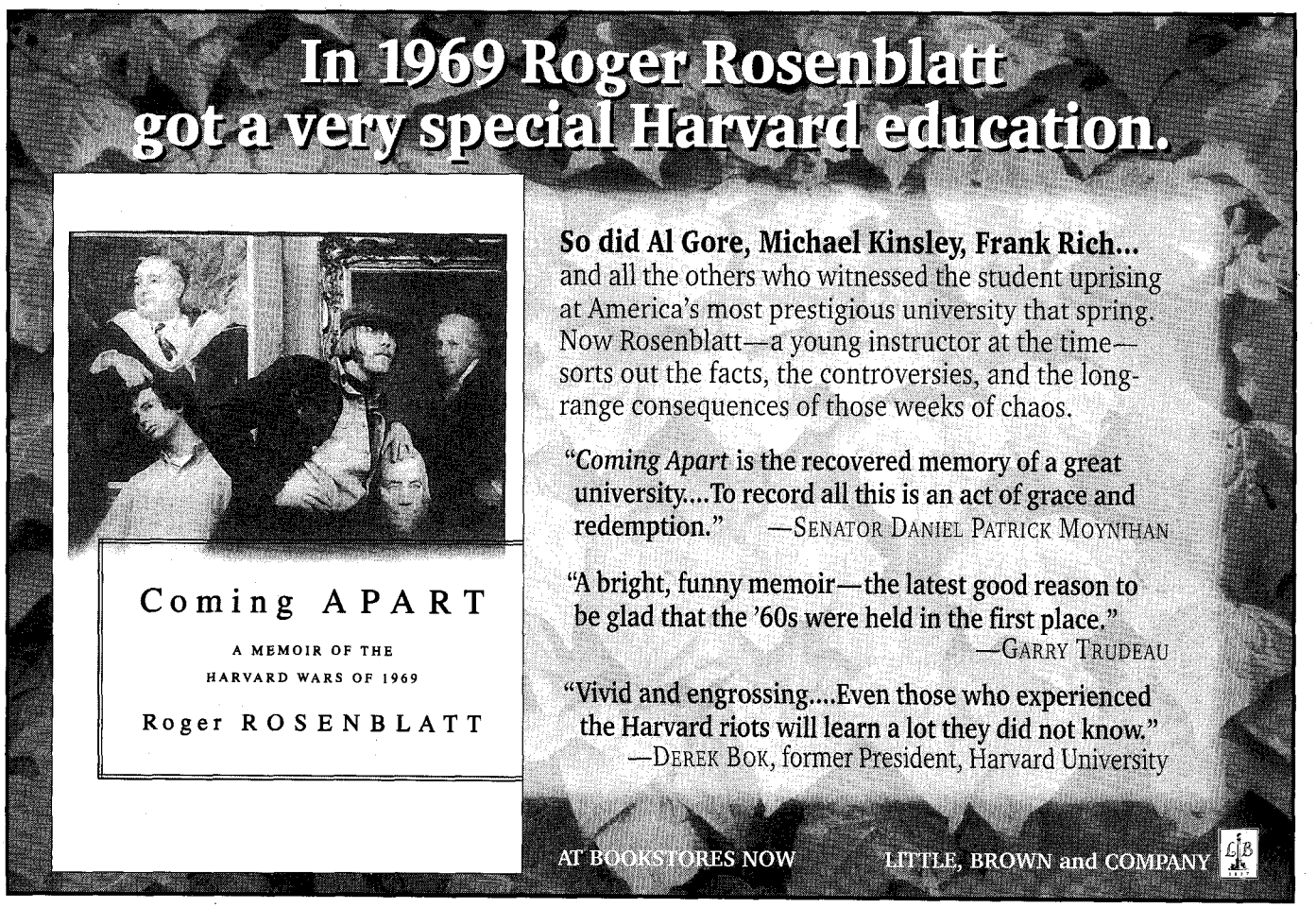
would insist that nothing at all was happening, or, if reports of bloodshed could not be suppressed, that government forces were responding to "terrorist" attacks. The Russians tried the same tactic in Chechnya. In Ogoniland, unlike in the Caucasus, the tactic largely worked.

In all likelihood, the attackers were members of the Nigerian armed forces. Still, whatever the army's exactions, nothing that the authorities undertook in the Niger River Delta was effective in suppressing the campaign that Saro-Wiwa had initiated. MOSOP's tactic of singling out Shell and demanding reparations for the environmental damage that the company's operations had done to Ogoniland were gathering strength at the time that Saro-Wiwa was arrested. Shell had declared that its decision to stay out of Ogoniland would remain in force until the civil disturbances ceased. But the trouble showed no sign of diminishing.

The Abacha regime was furious about this development, and it was under no illusion about the threat that an expansion of this kind of tribal activism to other Niger delta tribes posed. MOSOP had to be isolated. Otherwise there loomed the danger that many of the peoples of the delta would revolt against the oil companies. In that sense, Shell's shiny patter about the partnership between the company and the federal state was all too accurate. To Abacha and his cronies, an assault on one was an assault on the other. Small wonder, then, that Lieutenant Colonel Dauda Komo, a protégé of Abacha who was then the military governor of Rivers State, the region that encompasses Ogoniland, reportedly had made up his mind that Saro-Wiwa had to die.

The trial was a farce from the start, with witnesses testifying and then recanting their testimony, and the judges doing everything they could to prevent MOSOP's lawyers from mounting a proper defense. The condemned men doubtless knew of the regime's desire to destroy them. In the aftermath of the tribunal, protests against the sentences began to gather in intensity. Before the trial, the Ogoni cause had interested mainly environmental activists, a few committed journalists, and the governments of Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands; but now even allies of the Nigerian government such as John Major and Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and notably unsentimental leaders such as the head of the European Union, the Secretary-General of the British Commonwealth, and President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, joined in the appeals to spare Saro-Wiwa's life. The condemned men had at least some reason to hope (though some prescient outsiders such as Soyinka had concluded that their fates were sealed). It seems that none of them realized, on that morning when they were taken from the military camp where they had been held for eighteen months to the Port Harcourt prison, that they were going to their deaths.

They had all faced death before. To be an antigovernment activist in Nigeria in the Abacha era has been an increasingly perilous business. But to stand up, as Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues had done, not only to the Abacha regime, but also to the interests of the Shell Oil Company, was to court extinction. And yet Saro-Wiwa had already had the experience of being jailed and released before. In 1993, he was imprisoned in the same prison in Port Harcourt. In his memoir of that time, *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary*, he wrote of the "great number of people in Nigeria and abroad [who] had taken steps to save me." So there was at least some reason for Saro-Wiwa and his fellow prisoners to assume that the attention that their cases were receiving in Europe and North America would once again stay the regime's hand. Rumors persist in Lagos to this day that Saro-Wiwa could have made a deal and saved his life. But he laughed when Abacha tried to buy him off, and this slight cost him his life.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Saro-Wiwa was taken out first, and led into a room in which a makeshift scaffold had been erected. A black hood was pulled over his head; a noose was cinched around his neck. But when the chief hangman sprang the lever to drop the trapdoor beneath the prisoner's feet, nothing happened. For minutes, as the bound Saro-Wiwa stood there, the executioners tried to get the lever to operate properly. Then it was decided that Saro-Wiwa would not be killed first. One of the other prisoners would enable the hangmen to assure themselves that the scaffold was working properly.

Saro-Wiwa was led back to the holding cell where his eight comrades—John Kpunien, Barinem Kiobel, Baribo Bera, Saturday Dobue, Daniel Grakao, Monday Eawo, Felix Nwanie and Paul Levura—waited their turn to be murdered. Kpunien was chosen and led into the execution chamber. This time the trapdoor worked. Kpunien's body was removed, and Saro-Wiwa was brought in. But the trapdoor failed. Saro-Wiwa was led to one side, and waited as the henchmen tried to get the thing to do its job, as it had done a few minutes earlier when Kpunien died. At this point, Saro-Wiwa is reported to have screamed: "Why are you people doing this to me? What kind of a nation is this?"

On the fifth try, the Nigerian government's judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa was accomplished.

II.

It is not inaccurate to describe Ken Saro-Wiwa as a Nigerian writer who became the leading advocate of the rights of his people; but he was more than that. From the beginning of his career, he wore many hats. As a writer, he was prolific. He wrote novels, polemics, memoirs, political journalism, plays, poems and children's books. He was born in Bori, on the southern coast of Nigeria, in 1941, the son of an Ogoni chief, J. B. Wiwa, and at different times in his life he did energetic service as a publisher, a businessman, a government official and a television producer. The fame that he enjoyed within Nigeria to the end of his life was due to his having conceived and written "Basi & Co.," Nigeria's most popular television soap opera. As the English writer William Boyd remarks in his affecting preface to *A Month and a Day*, the show "was unashamedly pedagogic. What was wrong with Basi and his chums was wrong with Nigeria: none of them wanted to work, and they all acted as though the world owed them a living.... This was soap opera as a form of civic education."

Compared to Wole Soyinka or Chinua Achebe, the major writers of contemporary Nigeria, Saro-Wiwa's writing falls short. He had great energy, and a fertile, impatient imagination, but his literary gifts were more appropriate to the writing of film and television scripts than novels and short stories. Boyd's claim that he was a major writer does his heart credit, but not his head. Saro-Wiwa had only a modest talent. For the most part, his non-fiction is far more powerful than his fiction. Readers with no great knowledge of Nigeria would be most likely to admire, and to profit from, and to be moved by, *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary*, an account of a period of imprisonment in 1993. It is a cry from the heart of someone who is beginning to realize that he will not prevail. "I had been detained for a month and a day," Saro-Wiwa wrote in the book's conclusion, "during which I had witnessed the efficiency of evil.... The genocide of the Ogoni had taken on a new dimension. The manner of it I will narrate in my next book, if I live to tell the tale."

In his lifetime, Saro-Wiwa did write one important novel, *Sozaboy*, whose subtitle is *A Novel in Rotten English*. It appeared in 1985. Told in West African pidgin, *Sozaboy*, or "Soldier Boy," is the story of a young boy conscripted into the Biafran army during the civil war of 1967-70. It chronicles what Saro-Wiwa saw as the pointless horrors of that conflict with bitter verve and originality. At the end of the book, the young recruit simply flees. His message is clear and unflinching: "And I was thinking how I was prouding myself before to go to soza and call myself Sozaboy. But now if anybody say anything about war or even fight, I will just run and run and run. Believe me yours sincerely." It was advice that Saro-Wiwa was not to take himself.

The plaudits of ordinary Nigerians, especially for "Basi & Co.," were not the main reason that Saro-Wiwa was able to get away with his thinly disguised criticism of his society. His story is a complicated one. Despite his long history of activism on behalf of the Ogoni people—he was agitating for them since his school days—Saro-Wiwa was anything but an anti-establishment figure in Nigeria. Indeed, during the Biafran War of 1967-70, he won favor with an earlier generation of Nigerian military rulers by fiercely opposing the Ibo secessionists. He did so not out of a great belief in Nigerian federalism. As he would later explain in *On a Darkling Plain* (1989), his memoir of his role in the war, the Biafran conflict was not, in his view, about the right to self-determination of the Ibo people and the other southeastern tribes that sided with them, as the secessionists had claimed at the time. The war was, rather, "mostly about the control of the oil resources of the Ogoni and other ethnic groups in the Niger River Delta." Saro-Wiwa was utterly convinced that the choice was between "the Ogoni existing as one of 200 or so ethnic groups in Nigeria or as one of 50 or so ethnic groups in secessionist Biafra." And so "I identified with the federal government."

Most Ogonis had in fact sided with Biafran secession, and viewed the federal troops re-entering the Niger River Delta as occupiers, and so the value of Saro-Wiwa to the Nigerian authorities was substantial. And the rewards that he reaped personally for his anti-Ibo stance were immediate and considerable. Since his murder, this part of Saro-Wiwa's story has tended to be swept under the rug by his allies, as has the fact that, unlike Soyinka, he had not always been a steadfast critic of Nigeria's various despots. Yet to insist upon it does not in any way call into question the authenticity of his ever braver resistance to the authorities in the 1980s. By the early '90s, certainly, all his other activities had receded in importance for him, and he was devoting almost all of his energies to the cause of his own Ogoni people, inside Nigeria through the Movement for the Salvation of the Ogoni People, and in any foreign capital where he could get a hearing.

In the beginning, though, the swift rise of a 27-year-old academic, whose only published work was a pamphlet called *The Ogoni Nationality Today and Tomorrow*, owed more to preferments offered by the authorities during, and in the immediate aftermath of, the Biafran war than to anything else. Saro-Wiwa became a member of the government of the newly created Rivers State, which the Nigerian government had created as part of its decision, taken while the area was still controlled by Biafran forces, to transform southeastern Nigeria administratively, so that there would never again be an Ibo secession. As federal forces pushed their way into Ogoniland, Saro-Wiwa was appointed the civilian administrator of Bonny, an oil port on the Niger River Delta that adjoins Ogoniland. In 1968, after federal troops had regained control of all of Rivers State, he became a minister in the government there. He would remain in the post until 1973, three years after the final crushing of Biafra.

To the end of his life, Saro-Wiwa was unrepentant about his role in the Biafran conflict. The rebel Biafran government of Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, as he wrote in *On a Darkling Plain*, and repeated in *A Month and a Day*, was "hostile to the Ogoni ... people." For this reason,

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while Saro-Wiwa is now a hero to almost every decent Nigerian in Lagos, Kano, or Abuja, as well as to his many supporters abroad, he was a controversial figure among non-Ogonis in his own region of southeastern Nigeria during his lifetime, and he has remained one after his death. Saro-Wiwa was, in truth, a paradoxical figure, a cosmopolitan ethnic, an ethnic cosmopolitan, a tireless campaigner for human rights who was also a tireless tribalist.

That he had wanted no part of Biafra did not mean that Saro-Wiwa had all that much faith in a unitary Nigeria. It was, in his opinion, simply the least bad alternative. He was, to be sure, a member in good standing of the Nigerian elite, who claimed senior Nigerian employees of Shell among his schoolmates, and who had sent his children to be educated in Britain. (His youngest son died in 1992 while at Eton.) But he always saw himself first and foremost as an Ogoni. The more dangerous he saw the situation of the tribe becoming, the more he threw in his lot with it. "My worry about the Ogoni," he wrote in *A Month and a Day*, "has been an article of faith, conceived of in primary school, nurtured through secondary school, actualized in the Nigerian civil war in 1967-70 and during my tenure as a member of the Rivers State Executive Council, 1968-73."

It is understandable, I guess, that his Ogoni identity impelled him to side with the federal authorities in 1968-71, though it must also be noted that many other Ogonis, probably the majority of them, opted for Biafra. The Biafran secession was itself fought largely over oil. The Ibos, who dominated the Nigerian southeast, felt that its oil should be theirs to control; and when the military coup in 1966 put an end to the first Nigerian republic, which had been a fairly equal federation of regions with three regional governments, and most of the power that the Ibos had exercised in the eastern region was assumed by the federal authorities (the southeast was to be divided into three states), the Ibos opted for independence. In a sense, Saro-Wiwa's view of the Ogoni relationship to the Ibos was the Ibo view of their own relationship to the rest of Nigeria.

Would Biafra have been better or worse for the Ogoni? It is impossible to know what a Biafran state would have looked like. Where Saro-Wiwa was almost certainly right, though, was in perceiving that Ojukwu was no friend of the Ogoni people. Under the circumstances, it was perfectly plausible that he would welcome the new three-state arrangement, since it offered the possibility that in the future the Ogonis rather than the Ibos would play a dominant role in what had become Rivers State.

Saro-Wiwa hoped that the constitutional arrangements that would be created after the war would "take strong cognizance of our desires with regard to the companies prospecting or operating on our soil." Still, long before his arrest in 1994, he was writing that "I realize how pious my hopes were [in the aftermath of the Biafran war], and how much they failed." Having crushed the Biafran secession, the government of General Yakubu Gowon turned out to be no more interested in looking after the cultural or the material interests of numerically insignificant tribes such as the Ogoni than their predecessors had been. There are only half a million Ogonis in a country of more than 100 million. The central authorities, Saro-Wiwa observed bitterly, might pay lip service to the idea of Nigerian federalism, and to the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities, but their assurances were lies.

Unfortunately for the Ogoni, the aftermath of the Biafran war coincided with the oil boom of the 1970s, with the era of OPEC. The Nigerian authorities were obsessed with exploiting the resource. Within a few years of the end of the civil war, there had occurred a huge increase in exploration and extraction activities in Ogoniland, and it was becoming clear to Saro-Wiwa that the same officials who had found non-Ibo southeasterners such as himself useful during the conflict were now bent on developing the natural resources of Ogoniland, no matter what the human or environmental damage. The tribe's interests no longer mattered in a state besotted by fantasies of wealth and global importance. This was a time when there was much talk within the Nigerian elite of the country acquiring an "African" nuclear bomb and a seat on the Security Council, when the government believed that Nigeria was destined not only to lead Africa, but also to be a beacon for the African diaspora in Europe and North America.

Things looked very different in Ogoniland. As Saro-Wiwa put it in *A Month and a Day*, "the Rivers State itself did not prove to be any better than the Eastern Region in reconciling the interests of its component ethnic groups." All the peoples of the Niger delta had suffered tremendously during the Biafran war. Now the oil that lay beneath their soil was putting their physical survival at risk as surely as the fighting had done. And yet the determination of the federal authorities to exploit the delta was unshakable. As Saro-Wiwa pointed out, by the end of

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the 1970s oil had become "the be-all and end-all of Nigerian politics and the economy, as well as the central focus of all budgetary ambitions." The new federalist ethos provided a useful cover. Who were the Ogoni to stand in the way of Nigeria's progress? What this post-Biafran "unitarism" really meant, Saro-Wiwa wrote bitterly, was that "the resources of the Ogoni and other ethnic minorities in the Niger River Delta could be more easily purloined while paying lip service to Nigerian federalism and unity."

Oil revenues began to play an important role after the first large strikes were made in the mid-1950s by Shell Oil's corporate predecessor, Shell D'Arcy, which had been given exclusive rights to look for oil in 1937. It was in the 1960s, however, that the real profits began to materialize, once Shell finished a pipeline running from its fields in the Niger River Delta to the Bonny Island terminal near Port Harcourt. When Nigeria became independent, it was widely assumed that it would be one of the great success stories of the continent. Oil would provoke economic development, and the processes of modernization begun under colonialism would accelerate, this time to the benefit of Nigerians rather than foreign companies and Western consumers.

In the aftermath of the Biafran war, royalties from the oil companies became more and more critical to the country's survival. Nigeria was ruled by a succession of military regimes—beginning with General Gowon and including the regime led by General Obasanjo, who, since he has been imprisoned unjustly by General Abacha, is now wrongly regarded as having behaved a great deal better than other Nigerian military leaders—and these regimes had not the faintest idea of how to manage the Nigerian economy. It was a period in Africa when everyone was paying lip service to development. The reality was that neither the Gowon regime in the early 1970s, nor the Murtala-Obasanjo administration that succeeded it, was able to improve the real situation of the Nigerian economy. The only question is whether these rulers were venal or incompetent.

As a result of vastly increased revenues, Nigeria's rulers vastly increased state expenditures. The World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program in Africa is notoriously controversial—as Helmut Schmidt once said, "what is good for the World Bank must not necessarily be good for Africa"—but the Bank's report of 1994, *Adjustment in Africa*, is utterly convincing when it describes "Nigeria's missed opportunity" during the oil boom of 1973-83. As the report points out, the post-1973 increases in the price of oil meant that, for the subsequent decade, Nigeria and Indonesia received extra revenues amounting to about 20 percent of their Gross Domestic Products. The Indonesians used the windfalls ably. Nigeria's rulers squandered it. They directed spending to prestige projects in the cities (where government officials and their cronies lived), grotesquely increasing government consumption, and in many cases stealing outright.

When oil prices buckled in the mid-1980s, the Nigerian economy was totally unprepared. The country's rulers had come to view the oil monies as little more than what Tom Forrest, an economic historian of modern Nigeria, has described as "the opportunity for the large-scale personal acquisition of wealth by those with access to state power." Put more starkly, long before the collapse of the Nigerian economy in the 1980s, the elite was already robbing the state blind. All the while, foreign governments kept insisting that all was well, and putting Nigeria forward as a force for stability in Africa—an ideal regional hegemon, to use the conception favored by the Nixon and Ford administrations. Chinua Achebe's intuition that "Nigeria will die if we keep pretending that she is only slightly indisposed" went unheeded. The corruption, the mismanagement, the repression, the clientelism, and the incompetence of the Nigerian state increased. And the bust was even more dangerous than the boom: the more the economic situation deteriorated, the more the desperation of the satraps to hold on to their power grew.

Saro-Wiwa saw all this clearly. As the crisis deepened, and the situation of the Ogoni became more and more embattled, he came to recognize that his hopes had been in vain. He saw that, from the Biafran War to Abacha's seizure of power, oil on their land had been a catastrophe for Ogoniland. In the immediate aftermath of Nigerian independence, things had been somewhat different. Until the civil war, the practice had been for the authorities to share the oil revenues that they received from foreign companies such as Shell with local administrations on oil-bearing areas. Usually, the federal-local split was fifty-fifty. By 1980, however, only 1.5 percent of the proceeds were going to the people in the areas from which the oil was being extracted. And exploration and drilling were proceeding at a breakneck pace, with not the slightest regard for environmental or safety standards.

Ogoniland was being turned into a disaster area. And Nigerians outside the southeast were not especially perturbed. The previous arrangement, after all, had not favored the majority of Nigerians living in non-oil-producing parts of the country. For them, the despoliation of the Niger River Delta was a matter of passing concern. Economic times were hard, and the oil revenues were almost all that Nigeria could count on. To go back to the old system, in which the small tribes who lived in the oil production areas got a disproportionate share of the revenues, was a very unpopular idea. It was inevitable that, when Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues in MOSOP began to expose what was taking place in Ogoniland, when they carried their case to the National Minorities Council of the United Nations, the Nigerian authorities would respond with fury; but neither Saro-Wiwa nor his foreign supporters seem to have foreseen that there would be little sympathy for the Ogoni there among other Nigerians.

There has been a tendency since Saro-Wiwa's death to overstate the support that he received in Nigeria during his lifetime, and also the commitment that existed outside the country to the Ogoni struggle. Until Saro-Wiwa's arrest, detention, and death, the Ogoni cause stirred little interest, except among a few environmental activists and Anita Roddick, the owner of the Body Shop stores. Saro-Wiwa's trial, the image of the plucky writer with his pipe in his mouth standing up to a corrupt regime bent on murdering him, changed all that. Suddenly there was international outrage. It was fortunate for the Ogoni that they had a leader with Saro-Wiwa's charisma. Many other small tribal peoples, from the Amazon basin to southern Sudan, are uprooted and massacred without ever striking a resonant chord in the small number of rich countries whose public opinion can alter their fate. The real surprise is that the Saro-Wiwa case managed to compel as much attention as it did in our tragedy-saturated world.

III.

In *The Open Sore of a Continent*, Wole Soyinka observes that Nigeria has become a state without sense or purpose, except for the enrichment of the murderous kleptocracy that surrounds General Abacha. He ends his book with the suggestion that Saro-Wiwa's murder may have sounded the death-knell for Nigeria, that there is nothing left for decent Nigerians to defend any more, that, with the Abacha regime, "we may be witnessing, alas, the end of Nigerian history." It is hard to disagree. A nation that is now being underwritten largely by oil revenues that are put to no constructive

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purpose, and also now serves as the transit point for 50 percent of the heroin that arrives in the United States, may indeed be irredeemable. Indeed, the Nigerian disaster is so deep and so pervasive that it may well lead, in the very near future, to the breakup of Africa's most populous and (potentially) most rich and most important country.

What is most striking about Soyinka's book is that he no longer finds it possible to lament the end of Nigeria. He ends his book wrathfully. If Saro-Wiwa's death does lead to the end of the Nigerian nation, he writes, it "would be an act of divine justice richly deserved." It is by no means clear, however, that this collapse—Soyinka seems simultaneously to fear it and to look forward to it—will take place. Indeed, there is some evidence, despite intercommunal violence, continued unrest in some parts of the country, and a recent spate of mysterious bombings in Lagos, that in the past year the Abacha regime has solidified its grip on power and broadened its base of support.

Indeed, the most ominous sign that Soyinka may be wrong, that the rulers in Lagos may dodge their just deserts, may be the fate of Soyinka himself. In March 1997, he was condemned to death in absentia by another of General Abacha's tribunals on charges of "levying war" against Nigeria. Unlike Salman Rushdie, of course, Soyinka has all along insisted that the Abacha regime had to be toppled at all costs. Soyinka has not involved himself with antigovernment violence, but he has refused to condemn it. The death of Saro-Wiwa was, for Soyinka, the last straw; and, like Saro-Wiwa, Soyinka demands to know, in his book, "what sort of a nation is this?"

In Lagos, meanwhile, it is business as usual. And business as usual means, well, business. Businessmen who work in Nigeria say that they are finding it easier to conduct their affairs these days. And the political opposition is fragmented. Abacha continues to promise elections and a return to civilian rule, and many Nigerian politicians have chosen to participate in this charade, even though Moshood Abiola, the man who was legally elected president of Nigeria in 1993, continues to rot in jail. Anyway, the chances that a civilian government, of the sort that will stand up to the Nigerian military, might get elected are almost nil.

Nor can Nigeria rely upon what we complacently and inaccurately call "the international community." The aftermath of Saro-Wiwa's execution illustrated this perfectly. There was much talk of imposing serious sanctions against Nigeria, of expelling it from the British Commonwealth, of other steps against it. President Mandela was particularly outspoken. But the South African volte-face has been particularly startling. South African officials account for it privately by insisting that Mandela yielded to pressure from other African leaders who insisted that he tone down his criticisms of the Abacha regime. The administration in Pretoria has its hands full at home. Judging by its behavior during the crises in Liberia, Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi and Nigeria, and by its response to the American proposal to establish an African crisis intervention force, the Mandela government will not take the lead.

The important Western governments have been equally inconstant. As Aryeh Neier pointed out recently, we have a double standard about human rights. In countries of little or no economic or strategic importance, we stand on our principles. But Nigeria is not negligible. Its oil is important, as is the role that it plays in West African security, notably in the Nigerian-led ECOMOG peacekeeping force in Liberia. The Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights can issue all the reports on abuses in Nigeria that he likes, but when the American ambassador to Abuja has to negotiate a renewal of the Nigerian commitment to ECOMOG, he needs the cooperation of the same regime that his colleagues in Washington have so strenuously condemned.

The dissociation between the rhetoric and the reality of the Clinton administration's policy toward some of the very worst regimes in the world has distorted also its African diplomacy. It is true that American policymakers sometimes have the decency to be troubled by their own inconsistencies; they have not quite attained the cynicism of the Europeans. Still, these scruples did not prevent the United States from cultivating its ties to Mobutu Sese Seko's regime, when Zairean support for Savimbi's forces during the Angolan civil war was important, or, in the aftermath of the cold war, when Western governments needed Zaire to continue allowing the Hutu refugees from Rwanda to remain on Zairean soil. Washington withdrew its support for Mobutu at the last minute, to avoid the embarrassment of backing a loser. (It is not Washington that is to be blamed, though, for the discouraging fact that the alternative to Mobutu Sese Seko is Laurent Kabila.)

The United States could never deal firmly with Nigeria because of the Nigerian government's willingness to lead the African force trying to stabilize the situation in Liberia. Any pressure on the Abacha regime from Washington would have led to the withdrawal of Nigerian troops—a development that Washington, supremely unwilling to commit American troops, has been desperate to avoid. It is impossible to ask Abacha for favors one day and threaten him the next. There is no reason to think that the Clinton administration will behave any differently when the next group of dissidents are murdered by the Nigerian state. And that day may not be far off. Nineteen other MOSOP members are in jail in Port Harcourt. And now there is a government contract out on Soyinka.

IV.

For Wole Soyinka, the most important lesson of Ken Saro-Wiwa's life and death is the extent to which the last twenty years of Nigerian history has been simply the story of Ogoniland writ large. The really crucial question, though, is whether Nigeria is not Africa writ large. Are the pathologies that Soyinka lays bare in his own country not to be found also in almost all of sub-Saharan Africa? *The Open Sore of a Continent* is an important achievement not least because, without always making the case explicitly (although his brief remarks about the Rwandan genocide are very moving), the fate of Nigeria is, for Soyinka, the fate of Africa. The continent is itself beginning to seem like an open sore.

It must have cost Soyinka a great deal to come to this terrible conclusion. For a man with his anti-colonialist, nationalist, pan-Africanist sympathies to have witnessed the death of so many of his dreams, and to have admitted to his disenchantment so candidly, is remarkable. But if Soyinka is prepared to give up on so much, it is owing not only to his despair over the situation in Nigeria, but also to his commitment to the truth. All writers who turn their attention to politics say that they are committed to the truth. This writer really is. He does not seem to be worried that what he has to say will give aid and comfort to the "wrong" people.

If only the friends of Africa in the West could be as candid. Given the magnitude of the continent's crisis, treating Africa to the same unsentimental analysis that Soyinka has applied to his own country seems long overdue. At the political level, despite the efforts of Randall Robinson at the TransAfrica Institute to rouse support for protests against the Nigerian dictatorship, little of the fervor that accompanied anti-apartheid activism in the United States has proved transferable to abuses in Nigeria, or, for that matter, to what has taken place

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under Mobutu in Zaire or arap Moi in Kenya.

Consider only the case of Carol Moseley-Braun. The only African American in the U.S. Senate, she has shown herself to be anything but an opponent of the Abacha regime. She has strenuously opposed the Nigeria Democracy Act, which would have imposed American sanctions, and she met in Abuja with General Abacha and his wife (whom she commended for her support and promotion of family values), and she even traveled to Ogoniland in 1996, where she praised Lieutenant Colonel Daud Komo, the regional governor and the Nigerian official most responsible for Saro-Wiwa's murder. Moseley-Braun made at least one of these trips, in the company of her erstwhile fiancé and former campaign manager, Kgosie Matthews, who was at one time a lobbyist for the Nigerian government. And so Abacha, Mobutu and Arap Moi all continue to have their defenders in Washington, including a number of important African American political leaders. (And the odd Reaganite, too, such as Steve Symms, the former senator from Idaho, whose firm lobbies for Nigeria, thereby losing one for the Gipper.)

Too many people in Washington wish to ignore the truth about Africa, for reasons of business, solidarity, or—this seems to be the case with the Clinton administration's pronouncements on African affairs—because they fear that thinking gloomy thoughts makes them true. But the truth about Africa is almost unrelievedly awful. As even the most cursory look at the economic indicators reveals, an African revival is not what lies ahead. The urgent task in Africa, all the rosy predictions of the World Bank notwithstanding, is not to engineer recovery, it is to mitigate catastrophe. Officials at the Bank sometimes argue that countries such as South Korea were just as badly off in the 1950s as many African states are today, but with good economic management they became prosperous. Such an argument elides the difference between the economic conditions that obtained half a century ago, when labor was in high demand and the technological skills required for average workers fairly primitive, and the economic conditions today, when there is worldwide overproduction of low-end goods, a vast surplus of labor, and the need for a much more technologically proficient workforce. As in the colonial period, commodities such as oil are almost the only thing Africa has to offer, and many of these are available more cheaply elsewhere.

Africa has almost nothing to offer advanced global capitalism. There are better educated and better disciplined workers willing to work for very low wages all over the world. A collapsing infrastructure makes investment in much of Africa more expensive than in many other regions, no matter how low wagescales can be forced. Political corruption and political instability further raise the costs for most corporations. And the enormous population increase in Africa means that it is inconceivable that enough jobs can be created for all the people being born. The population of Rwanda was 1.5 million in 1940. Today, even after the genocide, it is over 7 million. The current estimate of the Nigerian population puts it at about 120 million (though census figures are notoriously unreliable). It will double in the next thirty years.

The end of the cold war, moreover, robbed the continent of its strategic urgency, and it is too far away from the borders of the rich countries to pose a threat of mass migration, as Mexico and the Caribbean do for the United States, and the Maghreb does for Western Europe. Africa, in sum, offers many reasons for indifference about Africa. From human rights to the environment, from demography to infrastructure, the news from Africa could hardly be worse. It is no longer a question of the independent African states not having lived up to the expectations of their citizens. (Thirty years ago, General Obasanjo could still insist with a straight face that he fully expected Nigeria to be "among the greatest nations in the world by the year 2000.") It is now a question of survival. Will large parts of sub-Saharan Africa ever exist at more than subsistence level? Will its people ever come to know anything better than Hobbesian horror?

In this dark setting, there is something especially exemplary about Soyinka's analysis. He does not harp upon the incontrovertible fact that the crippling legacy of imperialism, however much it has been used by African politicians and soldiers to cover up their crimes and blunders, remains pervasive. When people in the West consider, say, Zaire, bemoaning its savagery and its corruption, they link these failings to the fact that the Belgians all but cut off higher education to the Zaireans, and to the fact that, at the time of independence, that vast country could boast only a few thousand university graduates with advanced degrees. But Soyinka will brook no excuses for what has happened. He will not allow history to be made into an alibi.

"We have lost thirty years to the sergeants," President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, one of the few promising political leaders on the continent, has said. He is right. In an era in which the process of economic development by means of free (or freer) market activity is going well in most of the world, does anyone really care to do something for Africa? This is not a matter of aid. Sub-Saharan Africa has received more development aid per capita than any other region of the world over the past quarter of a century. Aid programs—most recently Boutros Boutros-Ghali's proposal for a $25 billion fund for African development—continue to be devised. Will the new assistance be more effective in fostering prosperity than the old assistance?

There will always be bankers and consultants willing to do one more survey, arrange one more loan, organize one more exercise in "capacity building"; but with no economic remedy and political reform in sight, the international response to the African crisis is likely to be damage control. To a large degree, the expansion of humanitarian aid is a concession to three notions: that Africa does not matter, and so development aid can be decreased; that Africa will be in a shambles, and so monies for disaster relief need to be increased; that Africans cannot look after themselves, and so foreign nongovernmental organizations need to take over certain basic services, whether these involve security, as the South African mercenary organization Executive Outcomes is providing in Sierra Leone, or medical care, as the American evangelical humanitarian group World Vision is providing in Mozambique.

But disaster relief is, by definition, an admission of defeat. It is in no sense a solution, as its best practitioners are the first to admit. But this, I fear, is the point: nobody has any realistic ideas about what to do. There is little in the present climate that the United Nations, which the late Anthony Parsons once described as a "decolonization machine," can do for Africa. The religion of development has not worked, as even most officials now reluctantly concede. Proposals still regularly issue from the United Nations, of course, ranging from U.N. trusteeships for failed states—a solution increasingly in vogue among international relief groups—to the massive payment of reparations by the European Union countries and the United States, an idea floated most recently by the historian Ali Mazrui. So here we are, reduced to the serious discussion of recolonization and reparation.

As Julius Nyerere has pointed out, without the anchors of the most important African states, above all Nigeria, Zaire, Kenya and South Africa, there can

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be no progress on the continent. It is all very well to linger over promising developments in the Ivory Coast, or Uganda, or Ghana, but those are small places. Even if they do better than expected economically, and are rewarded by international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the collapse of their huge neighbors will swamp them. If Zaire (or as it is now called, Congo) collapses, its neighbors will not be unscathed. The refugees alone will undo whatever progress they have made; and the skewing of resource allocation will see to the rest. And what holds true for Zaire holds true for Nigeria.

Similarly, if the most important countries on the continent remain dictatorships, any prospect of smaller, neighboring countries remaining or becoming democratic seems far-fetched. This is one of the reasons why, to the extent that foreign governments care at all about the fate of Africa, the questions of democracy and human rights will be critical in the coming period. A few years ago Amartya Sen showed in these pages that there has never been a famine in a free society. It seems equally safe to say that without democracy there will never be any recovery in Africa, hard as a democratic Africa is to imagine in present circumstances.

The moral reason is the best reason for caring about the ruin of Africa, and it may be the only reason. If help comes to Africa, it will be offered on grounds of decency, not on grounds of strategy. This, of course, is tantamount to saying that help will not come. The world does not work that way. •

Essences Rising

BY JAMES WOOD

The Actual
by Saul Bellow

(Viking, 104 pp., $17.95)

This novella is a ricochet from a talent that has already hit many targets: it has an interrupted energy. *The Actual* is slight, without the obvious weight of Bellow's major work. Yet it has its own nervous perfection. Like all his work, it is about our wrestle for the essential amid the piles of our emotional slack. Like several of his stories, it has at its buried center a portrait of a sharp, canny, limited old man, accustomed to power—the type of old commander whose abrasions and self-satisfactions enrage and delight Bellow. *The Actual* tells us that love is what matters; in this, too, the novella hangs from the branches of Bellow's more complicated work, offering in miniature the fruit of his deepest concerns.

The old man is Sigmund Adletsky, a very rich Chicago businessman, now in his 90s. He has dinner one evening with Harry Trellman, the narrator of the story, and summons him to his corporate palace. Harry is as vigilant as any of Bellow's narrators—a cognitive scout, riddled with sense-impressions. He cannot help noticing everything, and prides himself on this. At Adletsky's office, for instance, he reports on changed business fashions: "You no longer face an executive across his desk. You sit with him on a divan. Beside you is a coffee table with a demitasse, a dish of sugar cubes." He sees that Adletsky is like Napoleon on St. Helena, exiled and bored. "Now old age was Adletsky's exile." Harry is worldly, careful and clever. Adletsky, in his boredom, asks Harry to act as a kind of intellectual informer for him—to provide the old man with advice, entertainment, cultural scraps. Harry will be a kind of brain trust for Adletsky. Harry agrees.

Harry Trellman is middle-aged. He has been abroad for a while, in the Far East, and has now returned to Chicago. His sadness is his lifelong unrequited love for Amy Wustrin. She is "the actual" of the book's title—Harry's actual. He has loved her since high school, has watched her marry his old school friend Jay Wustrin—a large, confident, sexually accomplished, elephant-skinned lawyer—and watched her get divorced from him. When the book opens, Wustrin has recently died, and Harry, after decades of passionate expiration, sees his chance. "Half a century of feeling is invested in her, of fantasy, speculation, and absorption, of imaginary conversation," he admits to us. Unexpectedly it is Adletsky, whom Harry assumed to be uninterested in such things, who brings them together.

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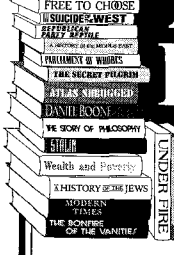

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Though *The Actual* has a rationed power, it has plenty of sentences on which Bellow has breathed. True, Chicago is taken for granted here, as it is not in the big novels. Lake Michigan, the streets, the scathing weather—all are quieted in this book. We are not in the Melvillean world of *Humboldt's Gift*, which nudged Lake Michigan into queued adjectives: "the limp silk fresh lilac drowning water." Still, Chicago may be quiet, but Bellow's people are not. Even in a mere 100 pages, his observations of physical detail have all the familiar comedy and the emphatic oddity. Amy Wustrin, in particular, sheds enticements. Bellow has often described women superbly. Renata, for instance, in *Humboldt's Gift*: "Her throat was ever so slightly ringed or rippled by some enriching feminine deposit"—a description that alters one's vision of a woman's neck, and which wittily rewards the body with its own mysterious metaphysical agency ("feminine deposit"). Bellow, via Harry, dotes on Amy. Harry can tell us "how she raises her profile to the spray" when she is in the shower, how, "when she shrugged, the soft breasts in her sweater added weight to her shrug," and how her imperfections arouse:

> The imperfect application of her lipstick was another point of identity. That was the whole power of it—the beauty of this flesh-and-blood mortality. Just as mortal was the shape of her bottom when she walked, a mature woman swinging a schoolbag. She didn't walk like a student. There was also the faulty management of her pumps. They dropped on the minor beat. This syncopation was the most telling of all. It bound the other traits together. What you were aware of was the ungainly sexiness of her movements and her posture. The years between, with their crises and wars and presidential campaigns, all the transformations of the present age, have had no power to change her looks, the size of her eyes, or the brevity of her teeth. There's the power of Eros for you.

And once again Bellow sees old age. There is Adletsky, tiny but firm; and his wife, "small and light—something like a satin-wrapped pupa." Bellow sees the way in which very old and elegant ladies, when sitting, seem to become detached from their legs, which suddenly appear to be too stilt-like to support a body. All this, in one flicked aside about Mrs. Adletsky: "Her bird legs, aslant, were laid together or set aside until they should be called upon to move." "Set aside"—the beauty of the observation lies in those two words. Mrs. Adletsky recalls Rappaport in *Seize The Day*, the ancient investor whom Tommy Wilhelm helps across the road, holding his "big but light elbow . . . the large hollow elbow."

SAUL BELLOW BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

There is a way in which Bellow's interest in physical markings turns all of his characters, of whatever age, into old people. His love of the Dickensian grotesque ages everyone. For the old wear their stretched essences on their bodies: their moral camouflage is faulty, their deformities fixed. Their bodies speak to us, as in *Herzog*: "the strong marks of decay: the big legs of women and blotted eyes of men, sunken mouths and inky nostrils." Likewise the rest of Bellow's people. Humboldt is not old, but he seems so: "he was gray stout sick dusty." Victor Wulpy, in "What Kind of Day Did You Have?" is aging but not old; yet his body is physically disheveled, "he wore his pants negligently."

Bellow reads bodies with Victorian judgment, as phrenologists would read skulls, dividing them into zones of power and motive. His characters are seniors in moral struggle, and their bodies are enormous, helpless gestures toward this. In *The Actual*, Harry tells us that, although he is Jewish, he has a vaguely Asiatic face, sometimes Chinese-looking, sometimes Japanese-looking. He has the finalized features of an old man—"a pair of fat black eyes, a wide mouth with sizable lip." His Asiatic face is part of his equipment as a careful noticer, the inscrutable Oriental vigilance that gives nothing back: "I seemed to . . . drown my emotions in my face, Chinese-style." Yet Harry's face expresses its function, for its Asiatic appearance marks it precisely as—in the Western myth—the face of one who sees carefully, through narrowed eyes. (Victor Wulpy, an art critic who misses nothing, has "narrow visual canals.") Harry's face is his destiny.

The comedy of Bellow's physical descriptions is that, although he insists on our free agency as intelligences and souls, he insists also on the imprisonment of our bodies. Physically, we are all victims, helpless account-keepers. This is why his comic protagonists are so often large, bearish, panting, fat-chested, clumsy men with delicate sensitivities—such as Tommy Wilhelm, Humboldt, Wulpy, Benn Crader in *More Die of Heartbreak* (who is "built like a Russian church—bulb-domed") and Harry Trellman in *The Actual*, who tells us that "I myself was both larger and heavier than my parents, though internally more fragile, perhaps."

That Bellow's characters wear their moral age so visibly, as a tree stump is ringed in years, tells us something about his metaphysics. In his fictional world—and *The Actual* offers a fine example—people do not stream with motives. They are embodied souls. There is very little activity in Bellow's world, even ordinary activity; indeed, a sign of his lovely strangeness is that it is almost impossible

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to find in his writing a sentence such as "He put down his drink and left the room." This is because Bellow's people do not have personalities but souls—souls that vibrate dynamically inside the body, throwing out signals and markers on the skin.

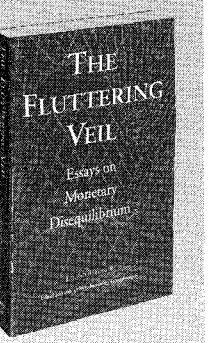
Though they want to live in the present, the world of ordinary activity, Bellow's people generally live in memory or in anticipation. Everything important has already happened to them, and they must lug around the sunken Atlantis of their pasts. Or they are in cognitive hiding, waiting for the completion of the here-and-now. Tommy Wilhelm's tragedy is precisely that he cannot "seize the day," cannot grasp the present. He is caught in a crevice of becoming. Suspended between his memory of past slights and the fear of future failures, he is trapped between his destiny and his will. In a smaller way, Harry Trellman is similarly arrested. He cannot join ordinary life because he is in waiting. He has spent his life waiting for Amy: "It was a lengthy intelligence job for me, cracking one cipher after another. Held up here for a week, there for a decade, I always knew where she was located and what she was up to, more or less." His uncanny powers of vigilance, honed on Amy, are a kind of evasion of life as much as an involvement.

These expressive humans act like Bellow's prose, logging impressions with broken speed. If their bodies can be read by us, their minds are in turn constantly reading the world, even if the messages received are aborted or confused: "Pausing on the metal doors of the sidewalk elevator, Moses [Herzog] received the raised pattern of the steel door through his thin shoes; like Braille. But he did not interpret a message." The world presses on Bellow's characters like Braille for those who do not need it. Reality is both a code and a distraction, and the task is to sort out the necessary from the superfluous. Old Adletsky would seem to have sorted things out; but, of course, he has really been engaged in superfluities, in money-making rather than soul-making. "He is very old now and small—light enough to fly away into the everlasting. His sons and grandsons, however, still report to him. His judgment in business matters, old style, is as sound as ever."

"Old style": Bellow's fiction is full of stern fathers and father figures. The relationship between father and son is one of the analogues, for Bellow, of intellectual inheritance. Here *The Actual* suggests a mellowing. Herzog remembers his father like this: "At three in the afternoon, half dressed, he came out for

Essays on Economics and Liberty

THE FLUTTERING VEIL
ESSAYS ON MONETARY DISEQUILIBRIUM
By Leland B. Yeager
Introduction by George Selgin



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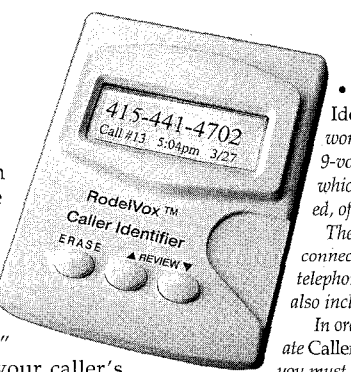

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his tea, silent, his face filled with stern anger." In *Seize The Day*, Tommy Wilhelm suffers the burden of his cruel, withholding father, Dr. Adler, who refuses to help his son financially, despite his riches. Tommy feels that "the fathers were no fathers and the sons no sons." Bellow suggests that contemporary intellectual confusions are partly a matter of perverted inheritance.

The difficulties we have had, in the modern age, are difficulties of intellectual patrimony. We are like spoiled children, saturated in wealth we do not know how to spend wisely. Herzog, writing his letters to the dead philosophers, stands before old ideas like a son before his father, hoping for a sign. He is childlike: "Dear Doktor Professor Heidegger, I should like to know what you mean by the expression 'the fall into the quotidian.' When did it happen?" "Dear Herr Nietzsche"; "Dear Mr. Kierkegaard"—these are silent parents. The connections have broken. Tamkin, the psychologist, tells Tommy: "From Euclid to Newton there was straight lines. The modern age analyses the wavers." The satisfactions that these parents offer do not quench the soul: " 'When a dog is drowning, you offer him a cup of water,' Papa used to say, bitterly," recalls Herzog. Nine years earlier, in *Seize The Day*, Bellow used a cup of water to signal a breakdown in communication and inheritance:

> Every other man spoke a language entirely his own, which he had figured out by private thinking; he had his own ideas and peculiar ways. If you wanted to talk about a glass of water, you had to start back with God creating the heavens and earth; the apple; Abraham; Moses and Jesus; Rome; the Middle Ages; gunpowder; the Revolution; back to Newton; up to Einstein; then war and Lenin and Hitler. After reviewing this and getting it all straight again you could proceed to talk about a glass of water. "I'm fainting, please get me a little water." You were lucky even then to make yourself understood.... You had to translate and translate, explain and explain, back and forth, and it was the punishment of hell itself not to understand or to be understood, not to know the crazy from the sane, the wise from the fools, the young from the old or the sick from the well. The fathers were no fathers and the sons no sons.

This is a great swipe at the maddening Bourse of modern life, everyone speaking an inessential language, or different data, to everyone else. Perhaps Bellow had in mind Emerson's passage in "Self-Reliance," in which he uses the image of a cup of water to complain that our individuality has been surrendered to collectivity, that "now we are a mob." Emerson laments that "man does not stand in awe of man, nor is his genius admonished to stay at home, to put itself in communication with the internal ocean, but it goes abroad to beg a cup of water of the urns of other men. We must go alone." Emerson and Bellow seem to say opposites: Emerson, that we have not enough privacy and cannot breathe; Bellow, that we have too much privacy and cannot breathe. Yet they are saying the same, which is that we do not have the right soul-privacy, the essential grounding that would enable us to communicate with ourselves and with each other. Remember, warns Emerson in the same essay, that "the whole world seems to be in conspiracy to importune you with emphatic trifles." We must separate what is necessary from what is trivial. This is one of the great themes of Bellow's writing; in this regard, he is our Emerson.

The Actual sets up a father-son relationship between Adletsky and Harry. But for once, communication is not arrested. At first Adletsky seems to resemble old Dr. Adler in *Seize The Day*. He is tough, shrewd, unimaginative. He describes an acquaintance like this: "He's got a condom over his heart. There's nothing human about bank officers." And Adletsky seems to have a condom over his own heart, blind to Harry's sadness. Harry decides that Adletsky and his kind (including Amy's late husband) were "commonplace people ... They were lacking in higher motives." And there follows a marvelous Bellovian tumble of accusations, the prose collapsing the ceiling and the basement, to manage

Golden Bough

as if it were already the broken-off and they the sheer
weight of the possible: or, as if they
were the broken-off and it
the thrust of all that is necessary, the balance

like a bough swinging lightly
in a breeze, a rush of thought making the air tremble
ever so slightly, and the way notes

cluster in a difficult passage, the dotted
sixteenths sugaring off, almost cloying, the ink
crossed and recrossed, written
over, just this hoard

of ciphers, this acrostic with the bass triads: or, as if
the theme were a branch and the notes
bees, a hive of cyclamates, the branch—or do I
mean the melody?—swinging back

and forth, it almost creaks like a gate
opening and closing against
the not yet, the what is still to come, the notes

swarming to that place, weighing heavily
so the branch tips with its bees
in deep drowse, though
busy, the workplace always going on

and also: but where the *also* is located, whether
it is part of the continuous, its
music, or whether it comes later, initiating
so to speak, a new era

workers dipping whatever is thought into huge vats, gold-
plating, stirring the possible until
it hums, the buttery, the sorghum—

I would have preferred some salt, some brine
the brackish even, some unripe to

lick from the stream from the *miele, mela, meglio, melisma*
the way a bear takes it, stings and all
the unkempt gold like a wedding of finches:

who would dare break it off?

Susan Mitchell

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an august raciness: "They were run-of-the-mill products of our mass democracy, with no distinctive contribution to make to the history of the species, satisfied to pile up money or seduce women, to copulate, thrive in the sack as the degenerate children of Eros, male but not manly, and living, the men and women alike, on threadbare ideas, without beauty, without virtue, without the slightest independence of spirit. . . ."

But Harry is wrong in one respect. Adletsky has employed Amy as his interior design consultant. Somehow, without exactly asking either Amy or Harry, he has divined that Harry's reason for remaining in Chicago is his obsession with Amy. His heart may be sheathed, but he sees that Harry's is not. Harry jokes that "at ninety-two, Adletsky was pioneering in compassion, a new field for him." But this crabby pioneer arranges for Harry and Amy to share one of his limousines, alone. It is here that Harry unburdens himself to Amy, confesses that there is nothing stronger than first love. Bellow finds a new sweetness and simplicity, as he has Harry describe this love:

> I had fallen in love with her when I was an adolescent schoolboy. This tremendous feeling came, as they say, "we know not whence." Everything—but *every*thing!—was as before . . . this love, straight and simple, an involuntary music, was an embarrassment to a little crook like me . . . this love, direct, from nature, came over me.

Harry, who was put in an orphanage when he was a little boy, and who mentions his father only once in the book, has discovered that Adletsky has acted like a father should, that the old patriarch has not been entirely without "higher motives." And Bellow tells us something that his work has never been too complicated to disdain, that (as Woody puts it in the story "A Silver Dish") "the goal, the project, the purpose was . . . that this world should eventually be a love world, that it should eventually recover and be entirely a world of love."

This calm nudity of statement—"love, direct, from nature"—might put us in mind of the unwounded nineteenth century. This is Bellow's patrimony, of course. He has written that when we read "the best nineteenth and twentieth century novelists, we soon realise that they are trying in a variety of ways to establish a definition of human nature." In most contemporary literature, however, "this power to understand the greatest human qualities appears to be dispersed, transformed, or altogether buried." He is like the great Russians in his determination to deliver his characters from the inessential.

And Bellow's characters speak nakedly; he is unafraid to allow them the flourish of the explicit. For it is precisely because we cannot say exactly what is essential, or exactly what God is like, or exactly what the actual is, that we can be explicit about our daring vagueness. It is at this moment that the best Bellovian comedy begins. We are delivered from the comedy of the inessential to the comedy of the essential; our metaphysical cloudiness, and in particular our fierce, clumsy attempts to make these clouds yield rain, is full of hilarious pathos. Fifty years ago, Bellow had the hero of his first novel, *Dangling Man*, wonder aloud: "But I must know what I myself am." Almost half a century later, Zetland, in "Zetland: By A Character Witness," asks himself: "What were we here for, of all strange beings and creatures the strangest?" Well, Bellow's work tells us, we are here to seek what we are here for. That is our actual. •

TRB *continued from page 6*

tions of predatory, if not depraved, behavior by Bill Clinton is far stronger" than the evidence supporting Anita Hill's allegations . . . [against] Clarence Thomas," and included "clear proof . . . that then-governor Clinton's state trooper-bodyguard . . . took [Jones] to meet Clinton—the boss of Jones's boss—alone in an upstairs suite at Little Rock's Excelsior Hotel, for the apparent purpose of sexual dalliance."

But Jones apparently never would have forgotten her place to the extent of complaining about this had not Trooper Ferguson, and later Clinton's shills, besmirched (in Jones's opinion) Jones's reputation. Initially she asked not for monetary damages, but only for an admission by Clinton that he had met her in that hotel room that day, and that she had done nothing improper. And, initially, Clinton was prepared to agree; Jones's lawyers and Clinton's lawyer Bob Bennett settled on a statement in which the president would say that he did not recall meeting Jones "in a room," but would add that "I do not challenge her claim that we met there," and that Jones "did not engage in any improper or sexual conduct."

But the president's very brilliant advisers could not resist, as they can never resist, spinning the story their way, and they leaked to the press the untrue charge that Jones was settling because she knew her accusations would not stand up to examination. That tore it, and Jones sued.

Clinton's argument that Jones's case should be postponed until after he leaves office was nothing but an expression of the theory of the deserving class. In Justice Stevens's words, the president's claim was that " 'in all but the most exceptional cases,' the Constitution affords the President temporary immunity from civil damages litigation arising out of events that occurred before he took office." In other words, Clinton couldn't be sued like any other citizen, even for actions taking place out of and utterly unrelated to office, because he was too valuable to the country. He couldn't be sued because he had to preserve his political viability.

No, said the entire Court, in tones of polite astonishment. "[W]e have never suggested that the President, or any other official, has an immunity that extends beyond the scope of any action taken in an official capacity." It seems odd that the Supreme Court had to inform the president that, as it noted in the syllabus of its opinion, "the President . . . is subject to the same laws that apply to all citizens," and that the imperative to do public good does not exempt one from those laws. Clinton thought that he was hitting on a woman, but he was hitting on an American.

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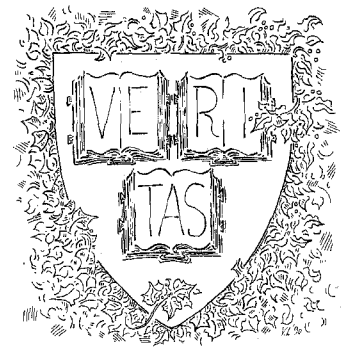
CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

When they were kings

IT IS THE EARLY '60S, AND I AM PREparing for my qualifying exams in Harvard's Ph.D. program in government. Four fields are required, with political theory mandatory. Two others suggest themselves almost axiomatically: international relations and comparative politics. Still, I am stretched a bit thin by the concentrated reading. So I need for my fourth subject something ... how shall I put this?... a bit lighter on the bibliography. A friend asks, "Why not African nationalism? Given its short history there can't be more than fifteen or twenty obligatory books; and you've already read four or five of them." She was right, and I had also taken Rupert Emerson's course for which the core text was the professor's own *From Empire to Nation* (1960), a statement of the age. The point is in the title. Emerson was convinced there was something inexorable about the triumph of the nation-state in Africa, and also something inexorable about independent Africa's moral, political and economic progress, and about the way that progress would transform the world. There were very few who did not agree, and, to be fair, I was among the many. The orthodoxy was not much challenged, and whenever someone like Kwame Nkrumah or Sekou Touré appeared in a Western capital (or at Oxford or one of the two Cambridges) it was as if Gandhi or Mazzini had arrived. I suspect, however, that only TNR's older readers now remember—and only barely, at that—that these were the leaders of postcolonial Ghana and Guinea. And almost no one remembers why such *éclat* attached to their presence.

FOR ME, THOUGH, THE FOCUS ON Africa was not quite so grandiose: it was about passing my orals. And I contrived several tricks to help me simulate familiarity. One was to practice tongue-twisting African names 'til they rolled off my tongue. My favorite was Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, fourteen syllables that I managed to make euphonious. (From Balewa, the statesmanlike first Federal Prime Minister of Nigeria, to General Sani Abacha there threads a long descent into savagery and chaos.) I also liked the alliterative sound of Oginga Odinga, a Kenyan nationalist.

NATIONALISM EVERYWHERE IS based partly on the retrieval of history, partly on myth-making. In Africa it was especially hard to distinguish between the two because, with the degraded state of the present, one couldn't easily imagine a grandiose past. Of course, we knew that there had been a mighty Asante kingdom, an ancient university at Timbuktu, a sophisticated theory of governance among the Yoruba, exquisite Benin sculptures in gold and bronze, etc. But what did these achievements of the remote past profit a man or woman in the Africa of the early 1960s—a continent, Thomas Hodgkin informed us, that faced independence with barely 5 million wage-earners or, to put it proportionally, a bare 5 percent of the entire population?



THE HODGKIN STAtistic reminds us that Africa has indeed been transformed over the last three decades by economic and political influences from abroad. But what of the moral character of those interactions? Are we surprised by the vast happenings of death in Africa today, the resilience of tyrannies, the persistence of lethal ethnic particularities, the palsied and crippled economies? To the extent that we are, we can attribute much of our naïveté to what Martin Staniland calls, in his remarkable book *American Intellectuals & African Nationalists, 1955-1970,* "the safari honeymoon" of liberalism with the movements of self-determination in Africa. Paradigmatic liberals like Adlai Stevenson and Chester Bowles fixed on the analogy to 1776. The contemporary nation builders were, like the Founding Fathers, modernizers and democrats. It was an age of primeval images: waves of the future, winds of change, rising tides of expectations. A teacher of mine, the late Stanley Diamond, wrote a defense of African dictatorship in Irving Howe's *Dissent.* W.E.B. DuBois's wife, Shirley Graham, compared Nkrumah's rhetoric to Homer's. But this was the least of her apologetics. Jack O'Dell, an aide to Dr. King and a noted communist, wrote that it was "quite conceivable that within little more than a generation the African continent could become a garden-spot of human civilization and culture in the modern world." A great deal of similar nonsense—though perhaps a bit less egregious—also appeared in THE NEW REPUBLIC.

IN 1962, EARLY IN THIS UNHAPPY history, a leftist French agronomist named René Dumont wrote a searing book, *L'Afrique noire est mal partie.* Dumont was bitterly attacked from the left, but, indeed, black Africa had started off on the wrong foot. Pat Moynihan once attributed Africa's failures to the fact that many of its postindependence leaders had imbibed Fabian socialism when they studied at the London School of Economics. Certainly, the rejection of capitalism left many African countries with economies and polities inimical to both economic development and freedom. But the mind of Mobutu Sese Seko was not among those hijacked by socialist intellectuals. The socialist intellectuals are responsible for much, but they are not responsible for the fact that, according to a scholarly study of corruption in Zaire, in the early 1980s, two-thirds of the names on the public payroll of that country were fictitious. A story is told of a group of French anthropologists sailing down the Congo River. They do some commerce with the people on the banks. As the boat makes its way through the waterway the visitors are greeted wherever there is habitation by lusty cheers. The rumor has reached the locals that the Belgians have returned.

THAT A COUNTRY (RE)NAMED Congo still exists is a tribute to the political uses of brute force. It was in the Congo, remember, where the first significant threat to the territorial integrity of the newly independent states occurred. On July 11, 1960, two weeks after Belgium formally transferred power to the Congolese, Moise Tshombe, the president of Katanga province, declared its secession. It was the case of an advanced people trying to elude domination by those less advanced, a just case. Immediately, the U.N. and the great powers rallied to the central government. If Katanga was to succeed, the well-wishers of African nationalism contended, the secessionist impulse would spread everywhere. Still, the secessionists held out for more than two years. It is true that Tshombe asked for—and got—help from Belgium. But Katanga was a prosperous and productive place, which, of course, as part of today's Zaire (make that yesterday's Zaire, today's Congo), it is no longer. The same may be said for the Ibos of Nigeria and their secessionist province of Biafra. In both places, ethnic and economic realities were obliterated on behalf of the grand dream of successful nationhood, a dream that has turned out to be not only a delusion but a cruel delusion. I steered away from discussing Katanga in my orals.

MARTIN PERETZ

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Growth cannot continue forever on a finite planet

What the Wall Street Journal doesn't want you to ask

Drops in the barrel

A recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the new Hibernia oil field in Canada offered "over a billion barrels of high-quality crude" and that "the security of a nearby oil reserve largely owned by U.S. companies and in a friendly country is hard to overestimate."

The article failed to mention that one billion barrels could satisfy only 56 days of U.S. oil consumption, and that it doesn't significantly change the estimates of total world petroleum resources. Security, indeed!

One billion barrels would satisfy only 56 days of U.S. oil consumption

Bye-bye petroleum

The petroleum era is coming to an end. The *Journal* doesn't like that notion, because it conflicts with the idea of business as usual, and growth and profits forever. What happens as the resource dwindles? Natural gas, like petroleum, is limited. Coal, the dirtiest fuel, threatens the environment and global climate. Nuclear power is dangerous. World hydroelectric resources are mostly already developed or expandable only by flooding badly needed farmlands.

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The *Wall Street Journal* and other Cornucopians focus on the supply side. They claim that human ingenuity and technology will sustain the economic growth and development needed by a rapidly growing world population.

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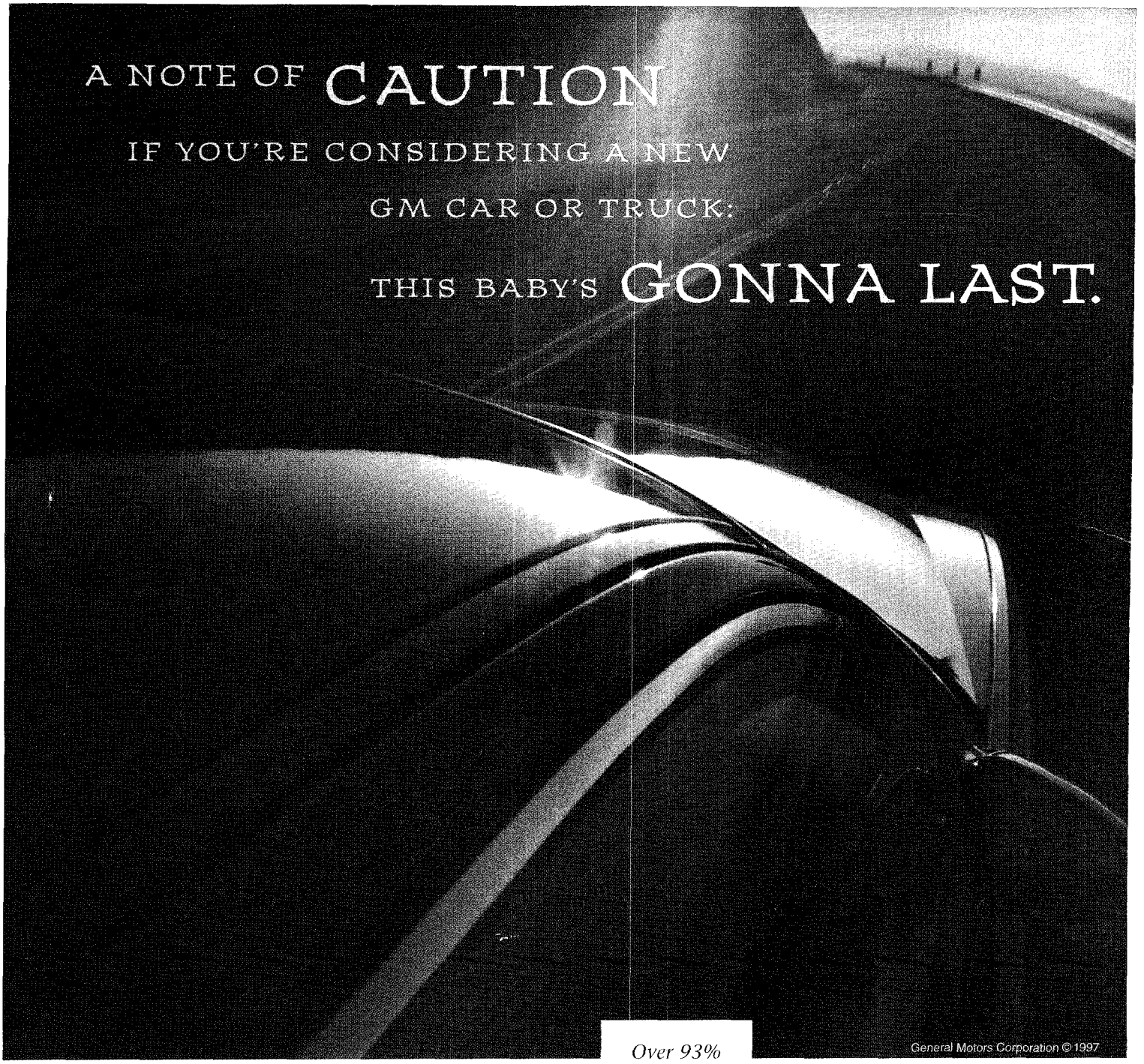

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